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MERVYN O'CONNOR

AND

OTHER TALES.

VOL. I.

MERVYN O'CONNOR

AND

OTHER TALES

BY

THE EARL OF DESART

AUTHOR OF

"THE HONOURABLE ELLA,"
"KELVERDALE,"
&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MERVYN O'CONNOR.

MERVYN O'CONNOR.

CHAPTER I.

I INTRODUCE MYSELF TO THE READER.

HOME for the holidays! What a delightful fact that was! How one revelled in the sight of the familiar scenes, of the loved faces, in the old amusements that seemed to lose half their flavour when transplanted to school! Everybody knows how far more delightful was that impromptu game of cricket, with a rolled-up piece of newspaper for a ball and a book for bat—which, perhaps, was the outcome of the emancipated schoolboy's wish to show his

joy at being again at home—than the most elaborately prepared and solemnly played game of school cricket, with all its fame and after-description in local papers and grand luncheon and white flannels. After going through this ceremony in a passage—the first parental greetings being over—it was the custom of Arthur and myself to proceed hurriedly, but very systematically, to various points of vantage—the old school-room, the first landing of the grand staircase, the servants' hall, the stable-yard, the orchard, and the steps in front of the hall door, and then, waving our caps, to give three hearty cheers at each place. That ceremony over, I think the housekeeper's room was visited, and our dinner duly spoiled by "lumps of delight" and such delicacies, which caused us to blush over our past infatuation for those unlovely bulls'-eyes which formed the only sweet stock in the village shop hard by our school.

Home for the holidays! How seldom one can manage to get home for the holidays in after-years! A bit of the drudgery of every-day life—of our grown-up school work—clings to us, go where we will; trouble obtrudes itself triumphantly in those moments which we have carefully arranged should be all pleasure, and we are apt to remember, in the very midst of our most careless gaiety, that awkward crack in our heart, received so long ago, but never to heal again.

And yet I am inclined to doubt whether child-life is quite so happy as it is the fashion to esteem it. If our child joys are very pure and sweet, so are our child woes exceedingly piteous.

An afternoon's dull despair over an undoable sum, with the sound of our luckier companion's play in our ears, and with the certain prospect of a flogging in the not remote future, is forgotten—the flogging over—in the next day's freedom and jol-

lity; but, nevertheless, during the sad time the little heart has ached very sorely, and the tears shed over those accursed figures have been bitter enough.

We, Arthur and Mervyn O'Connor, were as happy as children could well hope to be. Arthur was the elder, and had, at the age of two, inherited the baronetcy, while the rents rolled up into a goodly sum for his coming of age, not much lessened by the jointure drawn from them by our mother, with whom we lived at the old place in Ireland.

She, my mother, was then, and is still, my ideal of feminine beauty. She had married when very young, and lost her husband in two years' time. I was often told that she never quite recovered her looks after this grief; but as I first remembered her, tall and slender, with a far-away look in her great dark eyes, and a grace of movement beyond describing, she was beautiful enough in all conscience.

She was a curious mixture of worldly wisdom and worldly ignorance. Had she acted up to her own precepts she would have been wise beyond the wisdom of women, but unfortunately she always forgot to apply in her own case the knowledge she possessed. Having as a girl astonished and rather disgusted her parents by her very practical, not to say sordid, ideas about settling herself well in life, she proceeded to fall desperately in love with the third son of an Irish baronet of no very great fortune, and threatened to die incontinently unless permitted to marry him. Her parents —honest Somersetshire folk, who read the novels of the last century, and believed, perhaps, in death of a broken heart—gave their consent with some misgiving, buoyed up a little by the energetic manner in which the young bride made plans for economical living in the wedding state, and therefore proportionately cast down when—not very many months had elapsed—the sad story

of debt and difficulty began to be unfolded. But just as things were looking blackest, when the second boy had been born, and it was considered probable that his father would become a permanent inmate of a debtors' prison, the baronet and his eldest son managed to be carried off by fever, and my mother became Lady O'Connor, with an income and a carriage.

Hardly, however, was the ink dry of the letter in which she vindicated to her parents her foreseeing prudence, when she was left a widow. Sir Arthur, my father, who was in an infantry regiment, had sent in his papers, and intended to set up as a country gentleman. His brother officers gave him a farewell dinner, at which, as was the custom in those days, a vast amount of wine was drunk. The evening was wound up with some pistol practice in his room, at a mark he was accustomed to shoot at. In the morning the gay party staggered to their quarters to bed, leaving my father. A

few hours after, when the servant went to wake him up for his journey to his wife and family, who had preceded him to Ireland, he was lying—still dressed in uniform—stone dead, with a bullet-mark in the temple. The sad accident made a good deal of stir; sensible people shook their heads at the folly of pistol-shooting after a heavy dinner; and poor Lady O'Connor was a widow.

Everyone—that is, everyone interested in the matter—agreed that, after her first outburst of grief and horror, she behaved very well. When my father's great friend, Bayley North, who was junior to him in the regiment, and who was generally esteemed the best-looking, cleverest boy in the Army, came over to Ireland with those few little things of my father's which no doubt he thought she would like to receive from a friend's hand, and also probably for the purpose of telling her all he could of her husband's last days on earth, she cer-

tainly shut herself up and refused to see him; but after all, in her great grief, this was allowed to be only natural, and Mr. North returned without exchanging a word with his friend's widow.

Her determination not to re-marry, much as it might vex the souls of many admirers of her beauty and her jointure, also gave pleasure to the family; and the way in which she devoted herself, body and soul, to the welfare of her two little sons took the admiration of all. We learned from her only, until, clad in the shortest of jackets and armed with an undue share of pocket-money, we went to school to forget all we had so learnt, and to be taught instead how to play at cricket and football, how to evade the best efforts of our masters to teach us, and how to tell a lie.

That Arthur—who was utterly unlike me—was her favourite, I always knew; but even to my boyish comprehension it was plain that she struggled incessantly against

her predilection in this respect, and was determined that, whatever her heart might prompt, she would allow no material difference to exist between her treatment of him and of me. But that he had her heart on his side I knew; and the first bitter feelings I remember sprang from this source.

One day my pony ran away with me in the park, and the animal perhaps naturally supposing that, if he could pass under a bough of a tree, there was no duty incumbent on him of calculating whether I on his back could do the same, I was swept off with some violence, and picked up by the old steward, who happened to be passing by, and by my frightened elder brother, and conveyed, with a face covered with blood, homewards.

The steward went into my mother's room first to prepare her for the unlovely sight, and rather bungled his opening remarks.

"Arthur!" I heard her cry out, as I stood at the door more frightened than hurt, and conscious withal of some proper pride in my

wounded face—"Arthur hurt! Where is he? Oh, my boy!"

"It is not Sir Arthur," said the old man; "it is Master Mervyn."

"Mervyn, is it?" And the alteration in her tone hurts me even now to recall. "Where is he?" And then, when my face had been washed, and the damage discovered not to be excessive, it was Arthur, not me, that she folded in a passionate embrace; it was for him, I felt, not for me, that her lips moved in prayer.

I had all the external sympathy he would have had, and the same excusing of lessons, the same amount of plaister, the same little indulgences of an invalid, the same glory of a big arm-chair, and of breakfast in bed; but there was a something he would have had which it was out of her power to give me. Child as I was, I felt rather than knew this truth, and that night I cried myself to sleep, and took no pleasure in being the hero of my first accident.

I will pass over the rest of my boyhood as briefly as possible. Arthur and I were seldom apart long. We left our private school together, and were placed—thanks to my being a little quicker than he at my books—in the same division at Harreton College, where we learned a little, and rowed a good deal, and smoked our first pipes, and got flogged, and enjoyed ourselves as Harreton boys always do. One incident of the time I may recount, not that it made any great impression upon me then, but because it has a bearing on some of the after-events to be unfolded in this history.

One day my tutor came into the pupil-room, where I was vainly struggling with a most perverse copy of verses, into which false quantities would come as persistently as Charles I. into Mr. Dick's memorial, and told me to go to his room, where a gentleman wished to see me.

I rose and waited for Arthur to accompany me, the idea of anyone wishing to see

me, and not him, being preposterous. I wondered meanwhile which of my few "gentlemen" acquaintances it might be, and what the "tip" ready in his pocket; for the "half" was far gone and the "tick" score at the "sock" shop had assumed alarming dimensions.

"No, only you—O'Connor minor," said my tutor, observing my glance. And I went alone, wondering.

"So you're Mervyn O'Connor," said a wonderfully smartly-clad man of middle age (as I then deemed it—probably he was about thirty-one). "Come, let me have a look at you. Yes, devilish like her—devilish like her." And, as he drew me towards him, I was quite struck by the tender expression in his eyes, and for the moment forbore my speculations as to the forthcoming "tip."

He asked me several questions, but not one about Arthur, and cross-examined me closely as to my home-life, and then dis-

missed me with two things that surprised me vastly. One was a kiss—a kiss from a middle-aged stranger, and to me a Harreton boy!—the other was a five-pound note.

The delight in swaggering into old Brown's "sock" shop and demanding change in a proud voice, wherewith to settle my tick—the tick which had caused me many sleepless nights and many dreams of impecunious horror—quite expunged all recollection of the insulting kiss; and the admiring envy of my schoolfellows, not one of whom had ever received so splendid a "tip" from a stranger, made a very proud boy of me that day.

But the story had its sequel. Not many weeks afterwards came a letter from my mother, written in a tone that was new to me, in her.

She had been, she said, very much annoyed to hear that I had been permitted

to see a gentleman with whom she never wished me to become acquainted, and she warned me most impressively against an undue readiness to make undesirable friends.

"I do not say that in this case it was entirely your fault, my dear Mervyn; but I think it right to warn you that I shall be very angry if I ever hear of your seeing Mr. North again."

My tutor, who, it now seems to me, was not overburdened by a strict sense of justice, subsequently said to me, with much asperity,

"What did you mean by saying you knew that gentleman, who called for you the other day, at home?"

"Please, sir, I never said so," I stammered.

"Do not add to your fault by prevarication, sir. That will do;" and I was released, a little perplexed, but gathering from this incident that he also had received from my mother a "wigging," as I called it.

My conscience pricked me a little about the five-pound note; but, as it was spent, I saw no use in saying anything on the subject.

CHAPTER II.

I ENTER HER MAJESTY'S SERVICE.

BALLYCONOR, our home, to which, on the occasion of which I write, we had come for our last holidays, Harreton being outgrown, was very like many hundreds of other Squires' houses in the South of Ireland.

Of course it was called a castle, on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, for anything less like a castle than the ugly, square, barrack-looking house can scarcely be imagined, though, perhaps, some ominous-looking slits in the iron shutters on the first floor may have given a certain martial

appearance to it in observant eyes. These had been made as the iron shutters had been put up in the old troublous times, when an attack on a landlord's residence was a very usual way of finishing a pleasant evening, and when agent-shooting in the high-road was a most flourishing and exciting sport of "the boys," and had the merit of a safety which is denied to the battue shooters of the present day, with whom blind eyes are so common.

At Ballyconor, besides my mother, resided an old friend of the family, a Colonel Gilbeau—Archie Gilbeau, as everyone called him—whom we all loved. He called himself a *blasé*, disappointed, soured man, and we humoured him as much as possible in this idea, and ignored whenever we could the fact that in his intense enjoyment of life, of the very fact of living, and in his boyish glee at the smallest pleasure, he far surpassed either Arthur or myself.

Then there was Jim Leary, the agent,

who helped us to hunt our little pack of harriers, had taught us how to train our ponies over a country, and who was also supposed—Heaven save the mark!—to teach us the ins and outs of estate management. A dear good creature was Jim Leary, but with somewhat mixed ideas.

"You see," he would say, putting on his business face, and poring over an enormous rental, "you see, now, the Ballyglass estate brings in two thousand, and the Ballyhunter one thousand three hundred; well, then—bad cess to it, I forgot to tell them before leaving home to take that colt in—did ye see his leg, Arthur? Well, to resume; will you attend to me, av ye plase, Mr. Mervyn, and not look out of window; ye can see the horses exercising any other morning. Oh, blazes! the chestnut's lame—lame behind; don't you percave it, Mervyn? Never mind; that must keep. As I was saying, the Ballyglass estate bringing in—now I've lost the place—was it two thousand or three

thousand I said? By the way, Arthur, did they give the bay pony that ball, and is he coughing still? Ah, here's her ladyship!" and, much relieved, the worthy man would rise to his full height of six feet one and greet my mother, who came sailing in to see how our studies were progressing. I scarcely think she much believed in their reality, but at any rate they kept us sitting on our chairs for a couple of hours per diem, and diminished by that amount of time our chances of breaking our necks.

And wonderful was the way in which we screwed our well-bred ponies—always by thorough-bred sires—over those ugly stone-faced banks, and through, rather than over, those enormous ditches. Jim Leary, on a flea-bitten grey mare that could creep like a cat, would have followed her master even though he had, like Mr. Charles Reade's villain, taken to dancing the rogue's march on a razor's edge, and was even supposed to be able to talk to him during his long visits

to her in the stable, never looked back to see whether we had followed him, let the fence be ever so big; and as to his falling, it was unknown. The grey had five legs, and would have used her nose and her tail rather than fall upon her master, we honestly believed.

Those hunting days were very happy. I can feel again now, as I sit lonely and longing for the end of all, the glow of satisfaction that came over us three as we rode home one evening with a fox's brush hidden away in Jim's capacious shooting-jacket pocket, after a steady hunting run of about twelve miles, in which we had triumphed over our quarry by dint of sheer perseverance and nose. Horse and ponies could scarcely drag themselves along; the poor hounds, their sterns depressed and the tongues protruding, were quite unable to run even the ordinary homeward jog; and we were pretty certain that an ill-natured keeper knew of our accidental drawing of a

certain outlying fox-covert, into which, of course, we were prepared to aver a hare had run, and that a furious letter would very shortly reach Lady O'Connor from the outraged M.F.H.

But guilty as we were, perhaps because of our guilt, we were all three supremely happy; and as I say even now, after all the eventful years, I still feel a reflected pleasure at the recollection. And here, perhaps, I may stop to make a remark which, if not new, is to some extent true—that is, how guilt adds to every pleasure. From the day of the apple-eating in Paradise to that of "shirking" in the streets of Eton, the sense of naughtiness has given zest to the commonest and tamest amusement. The latter excitement has, I am told, been abolished; and I am quite sure that that walk on a Sunday to the Castle Terrace—where you *might* be, though you must never *be going* there—has lost most of its charm.

Going "out of bounds" is the one uni-

versal pleasure of humanity. You may put all your lovely flowers into the straight, easy, pleasant road, but the tourist will perversely climb the fence and stray into the fields, even though he find but stinging-nettles there. But I must not linger longer than necessary on the threshold of my story, though I confess the temptation so to do is almost irresistible.

Well, my brother and I lingered happily through the golden hours of youth, and never knew that each day gone took with it so much happiness we never should see again. We grew quickly up into tall youths of seventeen and eighteen, and then (after we had been at home for a whole year) a great event happened. We both fell in love. We had been so accustomed to do everything in unison that at first I don't think either of us was surprised or disconcerted at "the object" in each case being the same, but the inconvenience of this arrangement soon made itself felt.

Caroline Leary came home from her school near Dublin to take up her abode at her father's little house in the Park; and Arthur and I were knocked over all at once.

Jim took it very philosophically. "Ye'll git over it, my dear boys," he said one day, having observed that we had been during our hours of study casting looks of defiance at each other. "Ye'll get over it. Don't ye quarrel about a woman. There's none of them worth it. Carry's a good girl—a dacent good girl enough—but she's not worth a quarrel, any more than her moth——" Here he checked himself, but we filled in the sentence easily enough; knowing the commonly-reported history of the late Mrs. Leary, who loved whisky with more than Celtic ardour, and died for it like a true patriot.

But we did quarrel about Carry Leary, nevertheless; for one whole week not a syllable did we exchange, except when

obliged to do so by the exigencies of the chase, or in our mother's presence. I remember even on one occasion during this silent week, when I was as usual doing huntsman and Arthur was first whip (for I was rather quicker at the thing than he), my riding up to him and remarking in my very best and most courteously cutting manner—"Have the goodness, Sir Arthur, to put Pillager and Pleiad to me; they are running heel;" but then on that day I had actually seen her pin a bunch of violets in his button-hole, while my coat was flowerless!

At last I spoke. "Carry," I said, holding her hand, and trying to remember how Lord Floribel in that sweet novel, "The Marquis's Mistake; or, The Broken Heart," addressed his ladylove ("Adorable Leary!" would have been the formula had I remembered it), "I love you. So does Arthur. But I love you best! Tell me I do not love in vain!"

"Dear me, Mr. Mervyn!" giggled the girl, with not even a blush on her cheek; "oi'm engaged to Captain O'Slathery, of the Royal Buffs. Didn't ye know it, now? I thought all Doblin knew it, after the Castle ball, when he popped. Don't ye know the Captain? They say he can ride to the hounds with any man in Galway; and his uncle, by the mother's side, is owner of Kilmacurragh Castle, and has a whole stable full of blood harses."

So was my bright dream shattered! Thus ruthlessly was first love in my case sent to the four winds of heaven.

That night—over our pipes—Arthur and I vowed an eternal friendship: an alliance, defensive, perhaps, we savagely hinted, also offensive, to resist and overcome the wiles of faithless women; but it was long before either could drop in as before at Jim Leary's cottage, and longer still before we could laugh and joke as before with his bright-

eyed, cheery-cheeked, strongly-brogued daughter.

Jim went into fits of laughter when I confided to him my *désillusionnement*. "The little flirt," he said, "to catch ye both, too. But she's a good girl, and I could trust her. When Captain O'Slathery comes into his estate, which at present consists of splendid black whiskers, she'll make him a good wife. Never mind, my boy. Maybe it's taken the rough edge off your appetite, and ye'll be able to sit down quietly some day to the fashionable feast your lady mother's preparing for you in London."

"In London?"

"Yes—ye'll hear it all soon enough. But I may as well tell you that ye've to be a Guardsman."

"Why, when was that decided? And Arthur?"

"Oh, he'll be a country gentleman."

"A Guardsman—when did you hear it?"

"I heard her Ladyship and the Colonel talking of it yesterday."

I flew to the Colonel, who was reading a newspaper in his own especial chair in the library.

"What's all this about me?"

"About you, Mervyn—I am reading an article on the blessings—blessings!—of a thing called Free Trade. I fail to see how it can be about you."

"No. I mean about my going into the Guards."

"Do you like the idea?"

"Like it! I should think so. But I thought my mother——"

"Wished to keep you away from London life. Yes, but don't you see, my dear boy, it is impossible. Everyone gravitates there now-a-days; though Heaven only knows what they find; and if you go it would be better you should go in a proper position. I was in the Fourth Guards, you know, and wretched enough I was; but still, if you are

to be wretched, you may as well be wretched in the Fourth Guards as any other way."

"I believe you had great fun in those old days, Colonel Gilbeau," I said, a little maliciously, for it was a safe draw.

"Fun!" and he sat up with some ferocity, and threw away his newspaper. "I was a headstrong, stupid, heartless young scoundrel, sir. I ran about London doing as much harm to myself and everyone else as I could. Fun! The recollection of all the stupid things I did in those days makes me quite—egad!" and here he burst out laughing—"they were funny some of them, too. Did I ever tell you how we shaved off one of old McCorquodale's whiskers, and painted his noise bright red, and took him to Almack's, and how the Duchess of Devondale made the Duke call him out, and they fired seventeen shots at each other with bread bullets?"

"No, Colonel," said I, who knew the

story, and those which were sure to follow, but rather enjoyed them nevertheless.

Then, when he had run down, having given me a host of reminiscences, and having relapsed into his deprecation of such doings, I betook me to my mother.

"Yes, Mervyn," she said, looking at me with those melancholy eyes; "yes, I will not be selfish enough to do as I would wish and keep you in leading-strings here. Arthur, as owner of the place, with duties to do, will very fitly stay here and learn those duties, after he has seen something of life abroad. But for you, with a very limited income, a profession is necessary, and that of—of your father is the fittest." She mentioned the name of my father with an evident effort. Indeed, it was but seldom she could recall him without an outburst of grief terrible to witness.

"Yes, mother, I shall delight in it."

"Of course, I shall be blamed—I have already been blamed—for placing you in so

expensive a regiment as this; but Archie" —she waved her hand towards the library— Archie declares that with little care a young man can live cheaper in London than elsewhere, as he has no mess expenses; and I can recollect how dreadful those mess expenses were. Besides, Archie is actually going to live in London on purpose to offer you a home. He has bought a little house in Park Lane."

"Colonel Gilbeau live in London again?"

"Yes," said my mother, with a slight flush upon her face; yes, he thinks—and I am not sure that I quite disagree with him—that he has made this his home long enough. You see, Mervyn"—and here the blush became deeper—"although I am, of course, quite an old woman——"

"No, mother!"

"Yes, I am thirty-five next birthday. Even at that age one is not safe from ill-natured talk; and, although dear Archie is more my elder brother than anything else,

still for your sakes, my dear boys, I would rather that no one should have even the remotest right to say anything. So—well, so Archie is going to make a home for you in London; and I hope you'll always be good to him, and try to make him happy."

Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke, and I vowed, with a little surprise, considering my mother was a little apt to grumble at the Colonel's melancholy sentiments and noisy ebullition of amusement, that I would make him as happy as he would let me.

It was rather curious that for some time it never struck one of us that there was yet the little preliminary of an examination to be passed. I had done well enough at Harreton to be considered a very clever boy, and no one dreamed of doubting that I could manage this with ease. But at length the conclusion was come to that I had better make sure by going for a short time to what was vulgarly called a "cram-

mer's" near London; and thither, after our grand final day with the Ballyconor Harriers, at which even Colonel Gilbeau assisted, and rode with such vehemence that on two occasions he arrived over a fence in advance of his horse—a steady old Tory of a horse, that always looked many times before leaping—I went, saddened at least the first five miles of my journey by seeing the fond look which my mother, after waving an adieu to me, turned upon Arthur.

It is my hope that the reader of the following pages, will, before I have gone far, understand pretty accurately the character of the writer. Suffice it now to say that I was, at the time of which I write, a credulous, high-spirited, well-meaning youth; with a certain amount of quickness of apprehension, with a lively sense of humour, and a blind faith in my fellow-creatures, and in goodness generally; and endowed with a passionate longing for affection and

for popularity which bade fair to give me many a pang.

There are many boys, such as I then was, every day being launched upon the troubled sea of life; every day learning, with infinite sadness, the hard lessons of experience; every day gulping down those sentiments (sweet and good enough in themselves) that are too soft, too delicate for every-day use; every day discovering that the battle here is each for himself; that *Væ victis* is the cry that sounds loudest over the field of strife; and to each one of them I would say—my excuse being my experience—Do not harden because others are hard; do not disbelieve because you are betrayed; do not be aggressive because others, even your friends, war against you. Keep, oh! keep—for it is your dearest possession—every bit of credulity and softness that you can; cherish those feelings that provoke such shame at first in you, and such sneering in others.

There may come a time when all the glory, all the cynicism, all the proud independence of worldliness will pass away from you, and leave you, if you have no fund of honest feeling to fall back upon, poor indeed.

Because you have tasted so much Dead Sea fruit, do not believe there is no sweetness in the garden; because the evading, though apparent, nearness of the mountain top mocks your climbing ambition, do not desist in the attempt, do not sit down and mock the intrepid mountaineer.

Good there is a top, though you may have hitherto failed to find it; good there is *that you can and shall find*, if you only search on. Call this life what you will, after your cynical friends' gibes, after your bitterest disappointments, there is a heaven in it; but part of that heaven, or of the power of knowing of it, is in your own heart.

When, reader, you have seen what manner of man it is, and how situated, who writes these lines, you may turn back to

them and say to yourself that, if I can write so, it is difficult to doubt the truth of it.

After this digression I will simply add that I got through my examination, and in May, 1865, was gazetted to a commission in Her Majesty's Fourth Foot Guards. A letter I received a few days afterwards from my uncle, James O'Connor, I reserve for another chapter.

CHAPTER III.

UNCLE JAMES.

IT was with some surprise that I received this letter from my uncle James. His name was scarcely ever mentioned amongst us, and we all had a vague idea that he had committed some atrocious crime. My mother never alluded to him, save when obliged to do so with Jim Leary, for business reasons; and when she did so it was with such an accent of scorn that Arthur and I felt that it was incumbent on us to hate him and despise him. He lived, as we gathered, in a wild, mad, bad manner in a suburb of London, and did intense harm

under a pretence of doing intense good. What the harm he did was, or what good he simulated the doing of, we knew not. Enough for us that our mother disliked him. He must be a villain. And yet even then his letter did not seem altogether villainous to me. It certainly was not an enlivening one—it certainly did not present life to me in a very inviting aspect; but there seemed, even to me, something in its tone which rather upset my mental pictures of the scoundrel uncle.

"Was he not fond of my father?" I once asked my mother.

She shivered.

"Yes—no—how can I tell? Your uncle James was not easily understood. Your father thought he was fond of him."

"But you know he wasn't?" cried I, boy-like, jumping to a conclusion.

My mother rose with that grace that always fascinated me, and which, indeed, I have never seen since equalled.

"My dear Mervyn, there are some things which it is better not to speak of—for me—and for you."

Then she sighed and swept away.

In my recollection of her, more vivid even than her grace, her sweet temper, and her justice, if not fondness, for me, is the memory of the air of mystery which hung about her. That there was some secret attached to her I had instinctively felt since I had the power to feel anything; and here was my uncle James come in to intensify it. I hated him worse than ever.

"Colonel Gilbeau," I said, bursting in upon that gentleman, as he read a novel, "tell me, is my uncle James a blackguard, and what has he done to my mother?"

The Colonel looked up lazily, with his usual air of uncomplaining misery, a little spoiled by the irrepressible twinkle in his eye.

"A blackguard! What a word! My dear Mervyn, there is every kind of guard

in the world : a Horse Guard, a Foot Guard like you, a railway guard, a guard for your watch-chain, a camp guard, and many others, only there is no such thing as a blackguard, except as snuff—except as snuff," he repeated, reflectively, turning to his book.

Colonel Gilbeau, I should mention, was an inveterate snuff-taker, and this was the one and only point on which he and my mother fell out.

"But you have left my second question unanswered," I said, doggedly, sitting down opposite him.

He laid down his book with a sigh.

"'How absolute the knave is!' as Hamlet says of the grave-digger. Well, I will speak by the card. James O'Connor has always been serious. Probably he was born too serious to squall. As a boy I don't doubt he never played like other boys. He analysed their games, and found them full of nothingness. If a boy *could* play with a doll"—(and here the Colonel glanced at me

to accentuate a very old joke against me)—"and he had been such an extraordinary boy, he would have opened it, and wept over the sawdust inside. He——"

"Why, Colonel Gilbeau," I exclaimed, starting up, "he is exactly like you!"

This was a palpable hit, and the Colonel was obliged to have a pinch of snuff to arrange his answer.

"No, distinguish"—(as if a boy could distinguish; lines are all miles broad to him!)—"I know life thoroughly. I have done everything; seen everything. I know it's all humbug; but I am ready to acknowledge the value of humbug. Your uncle knows nothing, has seen nothing, has made up his mind that things generally are humbug, and that humbug has no merits. It's like a fellow abusing cookery when he has never dined at the Café Anglais."

"But what does he do?" I persisted.

"Do? He is a philanthropist. A man who supposes that, although unable to make

himself, that he knows a little, happy, he is still able to make others so, knowing them not at all."

"And who does he philanthropate?" inquired I, reckless of language.

"Dirty people who hate him for it. I think the cruelty of taking a jovial young thief away from his amusing profession and animated friends and making a bad, respectable pauper of him—half knave, half coward—is about as great as—as that hunt you had last year after a three-legged fox."

"He wasn't three-legged!" I answered, hotly; and then we forgot all about Uncle James, and wandered off into an abstruse argument as to the legitimacy of putting down a bag fox before harriers—a crime concerning which Colonel Gilbeau (who cherished recollections of Melton in the days when Lord Gardner rode the crop-eared horse, and Lord Wilton flew over a country, and "the" Lord Waterford jumped unnecessary gates, and young Lord Grey de

Wilton rode into unnecessary ponds—*vide* the well-known picture) was wont to chaff the members of the Ballyconor Hare Hunt Club most unmercifully.

Here is the letter which gave rise to my questionings concerning my unknown uncle:—

"Manor Lodge, Wandsworth.

"My dear Nephew,

"It was with much surprise, and, I will add, with some disapprobation, that I saw the announcement in the papers of your appointment to a regiment of the Guards.

"To begin with, as the younger son of a family not too well supplied with the world's goods, you should, if you must enter the Army, have gone into a less expensive corps. Secondly, your mother should have known that, of all places on earth, London was the last where you should be placed.

"To you, on the threshold of life, it is no

doubt useless for me to speak of the insidious temptation, the terrible excitement, that will await you in the capital of pleasure. I do not suppose you would listen to me; I am sure you would not believe me. Your first idea would be that this was what was always said to young men, generally by those who contemned the pleasures they had outgrown. Your second would be that I, who never mingled amongst people such as you are about to live with, can give on the subject no opinion worth taking. And yet I believe that I do know much that it will take you much time and cost you much pain to learn. I believe that human nature is much the same in all classes, and I therefore write asking you, as a favour to me, not to tear up my letter, but to read it again some day when perhaps you are wearied with enjoyment or disgusted by disappointment. Now you can scarcely believe I speak the truth. Then, perhaps, you will be obliged to own it.

"For, Mervyn O'Connor, I am interested in your fate, and I would, if I could, save you some of the agony that has come to me.

"You laugh at the word 'agony' now; you are young and strong and healthy. The world in its fairest aspect is before you. 'He jests at scars that never felt a wound.'

"But, jest as you may, that is no reason why you should unnecessarily incur the danger of the wound.

"Mervyn O'Connor, my brother Arthur would have spoken to you as I am about to speak, were he alive. His father—ay, and his father again before him—would join me in my warning could they re-visit the earth. You are young, ardent, no doubt longing to open that book which holds in its pages the magic mystery called 'love.' Beware of turning a leaf. There are death, misery, destruction there for you. Disbelieve those who tell you that 'love' is one of the heavenly attributes of our nature; without love, in that sense, the world would be pure.

It is the degraded sentiment which we vainly try to exalt by calling it pretty names, and invoking the blandishments and tricks of poets, that keeps us near akin to the brute beasts. Mervyn O'Connor, if you must love, love some one in whom there is nothing that you can respect, whose memory shall be as easily wiped out as the memory of your yesterday's dinner. Throw aside the silly trash called 'sentiment.'

"Do not let any woman's eyes, or words, or lying vows come between you and the business of life. As regards women, be cynical—you cannot be too much so. I write for you alone when I say that they are fatal. Would I could tell you more; but there are grave and sufficient reasons why I must stop short of that. But believe me when I do tell you that the very day you allow your senses to be carried captive by a woman will be the first day of your utter ruin—body and soul.

"Perhaps I might as well preach to the

winds as write thus to you; but I do it on the chance. You may have sufficient sense to take my warning. You may not be prejudiced against me, and may believe in my good wishes. I once was as you now are, and stood, panting with pleasurable excitement, at the opening of life. I stood so but a short time. The Fates overtook me almost before I had entered, and—— Some day, perhaps, you will find your way up to see me in this far-off region, and I may then be able to tell you more. Believe me, there is more in my words than the ordinary warning of an elderly man who has survived his pleasures. You are—much against my will—going into what is called Society; and going into it under the most fatal auspices. I hear you are good-looking; would to God you were loathsome to look upon! It would be for your good. I hear you are agreeable in women's society; would you were dumb! I hear you are ardent and enthusiastic; you are doomed!

Yet, no; it is barely possible that you may listen to my words—it is barely possible that it may be given to me to save you from The Curse. Remember what I have asked you. Keep this letter, and read it again some day. I do not ask you to come and see me when you reach London. It would be better for us not to meet yet. In due time we shall do so. Pray God we may meet without having the knowledge of another victim. Tell your mother that I shall be glad to hear, through Gilbeau or through North, what are the plans concerning Arthur. From reports I hear concerning him, he is not in your danger. This letter I beg you to consider private.

"Your Uncle,

"JAMES O'CONNOR."

"Mad," I said to myself, after perusing this extraordinary epistle; "quite mad. As far as I can make out, I am not to see any women in London. Poor fellow! I sup-

pose he has been thrown over—and that's the reason for his odd life."

Questioning Colonel Gilbeau in the smoking-room that night, I scarcely cleared up the mystery to my satisfaction.

"No, he's not mad," said the Colonel, puffing at his pipe. "Strange, if you please, but not mad. He was about as good-looking a young fellow as ever there was seen—better-looking than poor Arthur your father, by a long way. He went to Rome before going to the Bar—at least I think that was to have been his profession—and there was some mysterious business there—of course with a woman in it. No one ever quite knew the rights of it, only he came back to England a perfectly changed man, or rather boy, aged by ten years, they said, and then he quarrelled with your father. What about no one knew. All I do know is that the only communication that ever again took place between them was just before your poor father's death.

A letter addressed to your uncle was found on his table after that sad accident—alongside one to your mother—and was forwarded to him. For Heaven knows how many years James O'Connor has lived a sort of recluse life, doing a great deal of good in a stupid way—at least it seems stupid to me: for surely there are enough unconvicted persons to help without giving it all to scoundrels—but *never* seeing a woman. For that reason he has built a high wall round his place at Wandsworth, and never stirs outside it. There is a story that some wag once threw a lady's photograph—an actress's, I think—over the wall, and caused your uncle to go to bed for a month." And Colonel Gilbeau laughed grimly to himself.

"That would suit you, Colonel," said Arthur, smiling at me.

"No, my dear boy. You, like Mervyn, are afflicted with the boyish inability to distinguish subtle shades of difference. I despise women—excepting your mother and

mine, and, in fact, everybody's mother—but I do not mind meeting them and confounding their schemes. To run away is a confession of weakness. I have never run away from a woman, except——"

"Except when?" I cried, knowing that a story lay behind his hesitation.

"Well—between ourselves, my boys—on one occasion I *did* run away. You see I made a mistake—took a widow for a lady blessed with a live husband, and therefore allowed myself a latitude of language, and even of action, which would have been most reprehensible had I known the true state of the case. Well, the lady was quite ready—it was at a Bath hotel—and all arrangements, down to the post-chaise, were made, when I discovered on the very day arranged for our flight that she wished to escape, not a jealous husband, but a brother-in-law who would lose money by her re-marrying. It was very terrible."

"And what did you do, Colonel Gilbeau?"

I inquired, as he paused, overcome by the reminiscence.

"Do? I ostensibly put off the elopement an hour. I really ordered the chaise an hour earlier. I redoubled my first cautions against the possibility of pursuit, and I eloped at eleven p.m. alone, while the fair widow waited for the signal in her chamber. How long she waited I don't know. I flew to the Continent, and then another little affair, in which I was more fortunate, soon put this terrible business out of my mind. But, boys," he added, as we laughed, "don't think I ever enjoyed any of such follies. It is quite sad to look back upon so terrible a waste of time—and of sentiment." And to show how sad it was he opened his mouth to laugh, and in so doing let fall his pipe upon the floor.

"Emblematic," quoth he, picking it up, and this time with real sadness in his expression; "the only pipe I ever loved—broken, spoiled, and useless."

"Oh, no, Colonel; a little silver——"

"You young cynic! Well, perhaps you are right. Silver and gold will mend anything. Let somebody give me a really good cigar."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ADJUTANT.

ALL the innumerable pleasures of hope and imagination cling about a great city in the eyes of a young man about to be initiated, under favourable auspices, into its mysteries—about to commence life, not as one of a dull, droning congregation of country folk, with their stale news, their small tattle, and their narrow ideas, but as a unit—perhaps a not undistinguished one—of a busy crowd of the men and women who make social history, whose lives form, as it were, the living records of the age—with its grandeur and its meanness, its glories

and its failures. To an ardent boy such as I was that sunny morning in May, when I drove from Euston Square to the West-End hotel I intended to honour by my presence until formally installed in barracks, everything spoke of brightness and of life—life, not as we know it when the bloom has been rubbed off, and things present themselves to our vision not as they are, but as worse than they are; but breathing, burning, palpitating, achieving, glorious life, such as it ought to be, such as, alas! it can never be. And mingled with my restless happiness was a spice of that pleasure which comes, according to the amiable philosopher, to him watching from the shore the struggles of a friend in the sea. Look at those wretched people hurrying to and fro in the streets! Poor devils! How I pitied them! *They* were not officers in Her Majesty's Fourth Regiment of Foot Guards!

With what eagerness I scanned such

privates of the Household infantry as I chanced to pass! They scarcely noticed me as I went past them now in my Hansom cab; but perhaps in a few days—ay, in a few hours—I should be standing before them in all my glory, their officer!

Alas! I did not know how very little majesty there is in the goose-step and other rudiments of martial education. I had never withered under the haughty and scarcely-disguised contempt of a smart drill-sergeant; I had never blushed to the roots of my hair as I saw the covert smile go along the ranks of my company, responsive to some egregious blunder on my part in telling off; I had never, then, come trembling up with my tail—or my sword—between my legs, and been met with the stern reprimand, "A minute late for parade again, sir!" from the Colonel; I had never sat down with a mind perfectly devoid of imagination, or even of reasoning power, to

concoct a "reason in writing" for the Adjutant, in consequence of some utterly reasonless delinquency.

The one great thing in life, says someone, is Compromise; but I think a still larger part of it is taken up with disillusionments. We begin almost at once. The little girl who opened her doll and found the sawdust had before that found out many other things were not as they had seemed to her dawning intelligence. In the black-currant jelly lurked the insidious powder. Under the delicious sweet wine lay darkling the nauseous cods'-liver oil. The revel over hot elder-wine at night was followed by the dreadful application of candle-grease to one's insulted nose; the delicious draught out of our sponge while bathing was inevitably followed by the quick correction of the nurse's hand. Then there is the new pony, which we find we cannot hold, and are generally afraid of; the first gun, which we may not load for ourself, and which

hurts our arm when fired, while the scarcely-alarmed rabbit proceeds leisurely to his burrow, and the keeper smiles derisively. All disillusions—all going to add to the dull weight of experience ultimately to crush us down.

Even coming home for the holidays—that grand delight of boyhood—never quite comes up to the expected mark. In the restraints of school we find we have exaggerated the freedom of home life. Everything does not give way to our enjoyment as we fondly deemed it would; and we discover, to our intense astonishment and disgust, that the pleasure of doing nothing is not immeasurable, after all.

But to return.

Here I was, Ensign and Lieutenant in the Fourth Guards, in the capital of England, with a sum of £200 at my bankers, with an annual allowance of £400 a year, and with a splendid new uniform in a tin case. The summit of my ambition had been reached,

and yet, that first night in London, I was forced, in my solitude, to make friends with the waiter who brought me my dinner in the dingy coffee-room.

What I expected I scarcely knew. How the glories of London life were to come suddenly upon me I had never considered. I only do know that the first night of my splendour was a very wretched one, and I went to bed out of spirits and half-inclined to wish myself back again at Ballyconor.

Next morning, however, brought happier thoughts. I had sent a note to the Adjutant over-night, and at breakfast I received this reply:—

"DEAR O'CONNOR,

"You had better come to the orderly-room at twelve o'clock to-day—in uniform, if you have got it.

"Yours truly,

"HENRY MARX,

"*Captain and Adjutant Fourth Guards.*"

Fully half an hour before the necessary time I stood fully equipped on a chair before the glass over my fireplace, prepared to swiftly descend should I hear steps approaching. And then came a grand difficulty. How to hook up my sword, as I had seen done by officers in the street, I knew not; if I let it clatter at my side I fell over it, like an officer in a farce; and if I held it in my hand it seemed to me that I held it more like an umbrella than an implement of warfare. However, I think I managed to pass by the waiter in the passage with sufficient dignity, and, after paying my cabman about three times his fare—for how could an officer haggle about small change?—I marched across the parade-ground, returning the salutes of the men I met, with my heart in my mouth, longing with much intensity that I could only have put on a moustache with my uniform.

The orderly-room found, I had to wait

outside for a time, while prisoners marched in and out with their escorts—objects of much interest to me, who wondered what their fate might be. The sternness of military life—I was glad I had at once seen a little of this; and I looked at a dissipated-looking ruffian, scarcely recovered yet from his previous night's debauch, as he walked unsteadily back to the guard-room, with no evidence in my features of my pity for him.

"Oh, you're O'Connor, I suppose?" said a tall, fair man, coming out of the orderly-room. "I had forgotten all about you. Come in."

I entered, and, taking off my cap, advanced with a genial smile to greet the elderly gentleman at the table.

He smiled.

"You're a cool hand. Never mind. Put on your cap. Now salute. Marx, show him how to salute."

It was some time before I could suffici-

ently recover from my *gaucherie* to reply coherently to the questions put to me. Ultimately it was decided that I could have a room in barracks at once, and should take possession of it and commence drill on the morrow.

Then Marx, the Adjutant, most kindly took me about the barracks; introduced me to the Sergeant-Major, (who looked at me with a superciliously critical eye, and observed that I wanted some setting up, to which I nearly retorted that it seemed to me *he* wanted some setting down); and finally, after teaching me the mystery of hooking up a sword, and informing me that the Colonel, or the "C. O.," as he called him, was a capital fellow as long as you never omitted any detail of military duty, took me to his room, the comfort of which astounded me after all I had heard of barrack life, and proceeded to take out of his desk a large quantity of foolscap paper.

"I think you said you were fond of poetry?" he observed, fixing me with a somewhat glassy eye.

I had not said so; but I would have agreed with my Adjutant in anything, so I nodded.

"It is so seldom one meets a man who has a soul above—above ordinary things, you know. I really am very glad you have come into our battalion, O'Connor."

I thanked him with effusion, and he went on—

"If you're not in a hurry——"

I assured him that I was not.

"I should like to ask you what you think of a little thing I scribbled this morning. It is, I fancy you will say when you have heard it, worthy to go into the collection of poems I shall publish."

As I heard of this collection for the first time, I was scarcely competent to give an opinion; but I nodded, and Captain Marx looked quite satisfied, and read—

"Cynthia's eyes are sweetly blue,
Golden-tinted is her hair;
Pearly-white her teeth are, too,
Yet she drives me to despair.

"Cynthia loves *so* tenderly,
Gives caresses soft and shy,
Just what kisses ought to be—
Yet she makes me long to die.

"Cynthia vows she'll e'er be true—
Vows she's never loved before;
Yet I think, the while I woo,
That her vowing is a bore.

"For—a detail 'tis, I know,
Yet somehow I never can
Quite ignore that detail's woe—
Cynthia loves Another Man!"

"Capital!" said I; but he turned quickly to another page of the MS., and read out, looking at me between each line with an admiration-extorting glance,

"'Haughty Belinda' this little thing is called:—

'Could you love me, dear?' I said.
'Yes, I might,' she murmurèd;
(There was no one by),
'If I tried with might and main—
But you see, oh, love-sick swain,
I don't mean to try.'"

"Charming!" I exclaimed, with the natural ecstasy of the junior Ensign when listening to his superior officer's lucubrations.

"Yes," said Captain Marx, thoughtfully stroking his chin; "yes, I think it is neat—and happy—yes, decidedly happy. But it's only a trifle, as you see. Somewhat after the fashion of Suckling—or Herrick. Yes, more like Herrick. The fact is, my dear fellow," and here he lowered his voice impressively and put his hand on my shoulder, "the fact is that if these fellows, Herrick and such like, had lived in these days they never would have made their names."

"Really!" I said.

"No. Now you've heard these lines—you shall hear hundreds—thousands—of mine just as good—well, I fancy they have more *chic*, more delicate grace, than any of the old writers; yet, would you believe it, I have been sending them to editors of magazines for years and never got one in-

serted. Not one! Mind, I don't say that what were inserted are better than mine—no; only the asses of editors don't know a good thing when they see it; or, perhaps, are obliged to insert the poetry of the female members of their families. What I do say is that Herrick might have written himself sick before he would have got a verse printed—except at his own expense."

Then Captain Marx unfolded, with some pride and with a tender care that no mother handling her first-born child could have exceeded, the manuscript of his great work in ten cantos to which I listened till sleep overcame me—although I was not very apt to fall asleep in those days.

"You are tired after your journey," said he, putting away the papers with a sigh. "Very tired, poor boy, or you could not have gone to sleep while I read 'The Crime and the Curse.' Never mind. I'll read it you another day."

Mentally vowing that that day should be as far off as I could make it, I escaped; wondering whether it was part of a junior officer's understood duty to listen to the poetry of his seniors, and determined, should such be the case, to at once relinquish my position in the Fourth Guards.

"Old Marx been reading poetry to you?" observed a brother Ensign to whom, not long afterwards, I confided my doubts and fears. "Of course, newly-joined Ensigns are the only people who will listen to him. Why, even his servants always prefer to go back to the ranks in a week rather than have to do it."

"Does he read poetry to his servant?"

"I should think so. And he's very lucky now, for he's got one that sits still by the hour while he spouts. The only inconvenience is that poor Marx has to write down his orders."

"Why?"

"Oh, because the man's as nearly stone

deaf as possible. However, he does as audience; and no one else will stay."

* * * * * *

The commencement of my military life in London I will pass over. It has been described by able pens, and, monotonous, perhaps, to those who know it, it is scarcely interesting to those that do not. At first the solitude was galling, but before long I had met many old Harreton friends, and had become more or less intimately acquainted with most of my other brother-officers. In London, during the season, this latter operation is not quite so simple or so quick as might be supposed; for opportunities of converse on parade are not great, and, off duty, everyone had a hundred things to do which scarcely concerned a newly-joined ensign they scarcely knew. However, thanks to high spirits and a general wish to oblige, I soon became popular enough amongst the "young uns," and entered into London life under the auspices

of the lightest-hearted and perhaps the least scrupulous of them all.

Many things I saw that I had better not have seen; many things I did that I had better not have done; but I do not think that any of it tended at all to deteriorate me. I had such a fund of credulity and spontaneous belief in goodness that I scarcely saw all that I might have seen; nay, in some instances, I think I did see what others, more knowing, did not see. I saw good in things which others considered to be all evil; and, seeing it, perhaps I did something to increasing that good. Let a man or a woman be universally regarded as lost, and they are, from this cause, more than from their innate worthlessness, really lost. The touch of human kindness that is unsuspected, and to which we are long unaccustomed, comes with a quadrupled kindness from its very rarity; perhaps from a feeling it is undeserved.

In the life of every young man who has "lived" without too much regard to the moralities, only eager to be foremost in all so-called fun that may be going on, there must be sad—even sweet—remembrances scattered here and there in the most unlikely moments; a pair of soft blue eyes forgetting their venal smiles for a moment, and waxing dim as some heedless word, some snatch of music, reminds their owner of the long-deserted home: a passionate outburst of hatred of an unworthy life, which is perhaps real enough at the moment, though peradventure it may be soon cured by gin-and-water or champagne. It would be impossible for me to attempt to describe what I have set myself to describe, were I to take no heed of a current of life that under-runs, as it were, the broad public stream of the life of myself and those like me in their first years.

There it was: there it may still be for

aught I know. Bad enough, perhaps; but not so altogether bad as those who forget that human nature always is human nature would have us believe. I was as the other youths around me were; no better and no worse. There was more of high spirits and the mischief of the out-of-bounds schoolboy about it than of vice; and there was, I verily believe, less heartlessness in the unnameable places I am thinking of than in many a drawing-room in Belgravia or Mayfair.

Yes, I have heard of instances of noble self-sacrifice, of devotion, in that substratum of this London Society, which are worthy to be placed beside the noblest deeds of respectability.

It is not, however, to moralize over a question which may perhaps some day stir the world—we have had the first battle-notes from America—that I began this tale; and, apologising for having so taken up the

kind reader's time, I will come at once to my entrance into "the world."

But such an event requires a new chapter.

CHAPTER V.

LADY MONYMUSK.

"JOCK," said my especial crony, Tom Sackton, entering my room one morning, just as I was thinking of getting up; "are you going to the Tilliefruries' to-night?"

I may as well here mention that I was called Jock in the regiment, for no other reason that I ever could discover except that my name was Mervyn.

The careless question set me thinking. The Tilliefruries were people to whom I had been especially recommended by my mother, and also by Colonel Gilbeau, who

had been an early friend of her ladyship's. Hitherto I had carefully refrained from any society save that hinted at in the last chapter. Would it not be as well to make the plunge now, and to take this opportunity of making their acquaintance?

"Well," I answered, "I think I shall. The only thing against it is that I am not asked."

"Oh, that don't matter. It's not till Thursday—come and leave a card. Theirs are the best balls in London—no confounded girls there." And the old-young man shook his head with all the sagacity of one who had been hunted by mothers for a season. For Tom Sackton was—or was to be—rich in this world's goods, being heir to an immense estate in the Midlands. So we not long after found ourselves outside the Tilliefrurie portals, and I deposited two cards in the hands of the butler, a portly personage with a splendid expanse of white waistcoat, who was airing himself at the door. Tom

had stopped at the corner of the street, for, having his invitation, he had no need to leave a card, and when I rejoined him I at first thought he was in a fit of apoplexy, so red in the face was he. He dragged me round the corner and out of sight of Tilliefrurie House, and, just as I was about to loosen his collar, gave vent to an uproarious shout of laughter. "Oh! Jock, you are too beautiful! too splendid! Do you know who that was?"

"Why, the butler, of course! What on earth——"

"The butler! That was Archibald George Monymusk; Fifteenth Marquis of Tilliefrurie, and Hereditary Grand Chamberlain of Scotland; Captain-General of the Highland Irregular Cavalry; Trustee of the British Museum; etcetera, etcetera, etcetera." And again Tom's laughter burst forth.

I was horror-struck, and then angry.

"Why the deuce does he stand at the door and look like a butler, then?"

"Look like a butler! My dear Jock, you should see his butler. His lordship can't hold a candle to him in grandeur of deportment."

This was not exactly an auspicious way of commencing my acquaintance with the family of whose greatness my mother had so often spoken; but there was nothing to be done, and I returned a sadder and a wiser man to my club; and in the excitement of planning an Ascot man-party soon forgot the little *contretemps*.

But nevertheless when, faultlessly arrayed, I elbowed—or rather gently squeezed—my way up the stairs at Tilliefrurie House a few days afterwards, it recurred unpleasantly to my mind, particularly when, at the head of the staircase, I found myself face to face with my supposed butler.

"Ha! Here's my young friend who left his card on me the other day—I told you the story, my dear. My lady, here is Mr. O'Connor."

Lady Tilliefrurie, a superbly preserved woman, of whom it was an insult to say she *had been* handsome, turned with a smile and gave me her hand, giving the said hand at the same time a slight pull which said plainly enough, "Go on, and allow other more worthy ones to come up." So I moved on, a little mortified; for in my own county the few ladies who entertained were not wont so unceremoniously to evade my small talk. In a few minutes I ran against an acquaintance—a Major Draper, who was to be one of our Ascot party, and who most obligingly took me in hand and introduced me to many persons, and set me fairly going in the dancing way.

The shyness that at first oppressed me soon wore off, and I was full of the courage with which a slight flirtation with an elderly girl, whom I had taken to supper and supplied liberally with champagne and cutlets, had given me, when my eyes fell

upon an apparition that fairly took away my breath.

Tom Sackton was passing, hurrying to his partner as the music commenced; but I laid ruthless hands on him.

"Stop a moment!" I cried, my heart beating wildly as I spoke. "Tell me who that lovely woman is!"

"That! Don't you know? That's Lady Monymusk," and he disappeared.

Monymusk was the title of the eldest son of the house, who had lately returned from a journey in America, in which his wife had, I knew, accompanied him, and had done something wonderful in the way of roughing it in the Yellowstone Mountains. To be presented to her was now my sole object and ambition in life. I threw over two partners in my search of some one to do this office. I dashed aimlessly about, getting in everyone's way, until at last, seeing my beauty approach Lady Tilliefrurie, I plucked

up courage and boldly went up and asked her to introduce me.

The elder lady opened her fine eyes very wide (wide enough, I thought maliciously, to multiply the crows'-feet that were visible at close quarters) and hesitated for a moment. As I stood there, however, apparently calmly determined, but inwardly in a mighty fear, she assented—"Gertrude dear, Mr. O'Connor wishes to know you."

I bowed, and in another moment, I know not how, found myself descending the staircase, on the way to the supper-room, with Lady Monymusk's little hand lying on my arm.

"Your first ball?" she said, soon after, when we had obtained a round table all to ourselves. "That is charming. It makes you quite interesting. Very soon you will be just like all the other young men, saying the same thing as they do, cut out according to the regulation pattern, like

Army clothes or boots. They tell me there are only two sizes of boots issued to the soldiers, and one or the other size they must fit into. It often seems to me that young men are much the same; only there is but one size of them."

I haven't the remotest notion of what I said. I only know that as I sat there and looked at her bright hazel eyes and watched the soft, shy smiles that played about her lips, and could not keep my eyes from the delicately-moulded form whose every movement was a poem, I was in a dream of heaven. How I hated the moustached ruffian who came and took her away from me! How murdersome were my feelings with regard to that woman who talked to her, when the dance was over, for ten minutes by the clock; how deftly I awaited the proper moment, and then was anticipated by another ruffian in my endeavour to take her to her carriage; how wildly happy I was when she smiled a good night

to me ere she entered it; how dazedly I walked home, puffing vigorously at an unlit cigar; how transcendent were my waking thoughts before I slept; how inconsequently sweet were the dreams which my servant dissipated at "ten minutes to parade" time!

"Do you know Monymusk?" I asked at lunch that day.

"Yes—of course—at least, I know him as much as anyone else, which is scarcely at all."

"Why?"

"Why? Well, he's a rum chap—a little touched in the head, I think," said Tom Sackton, sipping his sherry thoughtfully. "Some say it's bad health, but I believe it's bad temper. Went off at a moment's notice to the wilds somewhere, and made that pretty woman go with him and wear skins and live on locusts and wild honey. But, by Jove, she is a stunner, isn't she?"

I preserved a dignified silence. The idea of Gertrude—already in my thoughts I called her Gertrude—being spoken of as "a stunner" was to me as the idea of a certain class of paintings being called art is to Mr. Ruskin.

Trembling in every limb, a few days afterwards I called in Hertford Street, where the Monymusks lived; but fruitlessly —she was "not at home."

Then I went into the Park and despaired for half-an-hour, till it struck me that it was barely possible that, at an hour when most ladies were out driving, she might be doing the same; and I was a little comforted.

Wildly I paid duty visits and asked for invitations—efforts which were rewarded by a rapidly-increasing quantity of cards to stick into the glass over my mantelpiece; but ball after ball and party after party did I attend vainly. She was nowhere.

Day after day did I find important

business which necessitated my walking down Hertford Street; but also in vain. Nothing did I see save the closed muslin curtains of the first-floor windows. My habits changed. I gave up everything that I fancied could be offensive to the sanctity of my divinity. I lived only for her—only for a woman whom I had once met, and with whom I had only exchanged a few meaningless sentences in a ball-room!

Love at first sight may or may not be possible. I only know that I have never felt the same again as I felt when under the influence of the recollection of those hazel eyes.

CHAPTER VI.

BAYLEY NORTH.

HOWEVER much in love a young man may be, certain pleasures will nevertheless assert some ascendancy over him; he cannot be always sighing like a furnace, nor is it possible for him to spend all the twelve hours penning sonnets to his mistress's eyebrow. And for a young man whose business, as it were, forces him into gaiety, or at any rate into the society of those to whom gaiety is the business of their lives, it is impossible to allow his love, be it ever so strong, to entirely absorb him. Although in the very middle of the sweet

thing called "Love's young dream," I yet had time to give to some of the diversions of my position; and of all the diversions more essentially fitted to the position of an Ensign and Lieutenant in the Guards, give me Ascot races. I say Ascot particularly, as the head of those meetings which combine the sport of the thing with the society of the thing in a pre-eminent degree. Goodwood, of course, is as good; but then Goodwood, at the time of which I write, was scarcely, in the proper sense of the term, a "popular" race-meeting, and some part of the charm of Ascot was the fact that, once outside the sacred "enclosure," you could meet a good many people—as amusing as those inside, perhaps, but unnameable to them. Epsom was too big and vulgar; Goodwood too small and select; Ascot combined the charms of both with the disadvantages of neither.

So to Windsor one bright Monday did I, in company with some half-dozen youngsters as thoughtless as, if less in love than, I, go down, and almost forgot Lady Monymusk's —Gertrude's—unfathomable eyes in the blissful anticipation of my week as honorary member of the mess of the regiment quartered there.

Deeply did one of us study "Ruff" *en route;* whimsically did another chaff the officials and make fun generally of every human being he saw, with occasional variations, when no human being could be seen, into the comic ditties of the day, or rather the night, given with exquisite imitation of the music-hall gentleman who sang them. Pleasantly did Marx (who had been persuaded to allow an ambitious junior, anxious to show his zeal, to do Adjutant for a week) discourse in my ear of the witty verses which might be written anent the Ascot Week and its follies.

Beautifully did Charlie Greenaway, our beauty, gaze at such ladies as from the platform encountered his earnest eyes; and wisely did our Colonel, who happened to be in the carriage, converse as to the folly of young fellows presuming to bet until they at least knew "Ruff" by heart, had made the intimate acquaintance of most of the owners and all the trainers of racehorses, and were able to compete with "the Admiral" in the proper adjustment of the weights of a handicap.

I felt angry with myself once or twice when, laughing at some remark of Tom Sackton, or wondering at the mimic skill of Johnny Blowes, I found that I had quite forgotten my *grande passion*—a passion of which, by the way, I was intensely proud; and which I had actually gone so far as, one evening, after perhaps an extra glass of brandy-and-soda, to confide to my ally, Tom Sackton, whose sympathy was, if a little coarse, thoroughly flattering.

Tom believed in me already, although I was two years his junior, both in years and regimental seniority. That ladies should fall in love with me he looked upon as correct, and only following out the fitness of things; and he, indeed, once went so far as to give up dancing with Lady Alice Manworthy, only because I had reported to him a little incident of my first week's ball-going. Which incident was this—

Emboldened by the soft glances of my previous partners, I had dared not only to be introduced to the reigning beauty (in those days there were "reigning beauties" amongst the girls—the young married women had not monopolised everything then), but actually to ask her to come down to supper with me. Now, as is well known, to ask an acknowledged beauty (I speak of those days, *bien entendu*) to dance at all on first introduction was a piece of impudence, even when the dance was to be "square." To ask her to *valse* was almost unparalleled

effrontery, but to ask her to come to supper! No punishment in the way of snubbing could be too great.

Lady Alice tried to look down upon me, but as the sweet creature's head only reached my shoulder, this was scarcely to be done. Then she raised her blue eyes to mine with a wealth (as the novelists have it)—a wealth of meaning—and very unpleasant meaning—in them; yet still I quailed not, but stood my ground manfully, holding out my arm.

It is said that a great millionaire of well-known habits of caution was once astonished into backing an impecunious speculator's bill by the very wonder of the latter daring to make such a request. The same effect was achieved in my case. Lady Alice put her little hand on my proffered arm and came to supper!

But then her revenge began. To my brilliant small talk, which became less brilliant as it ran itself out, she only

responded by supercilious little raisings of the eyebrows and shrugging of the shoulders. Not a word came out of the haughtily-curved little mouth; not a glance from the magnificent eyes. I might have been a footman waiting upon her little ladyship at supper—a footman who forgot himself and had to be kept in his proper place. At last she had finished her chicken wing and rose, taking my arm again as she would have taken up a stick, just to assist her up the stairs. Then, just as we were nearing the corner where dozed her mother, she fired a shot—

"I thought the holidays had not begun yet!"

"Holidays! Leave, you mean. Oh, I am going to do duty with my regimen another six months."

"Really; but surely that doesn't let you free from school?"

"School, Lady Alice! I am in the Fourth Guards!"

"Indeed! I thought you were in the Eton Volunteers."

Then she turned with a smile to a monster with an immense moustache—that object of my young ambition!—and seemed entirely to forget the existence of one so insignificant as I.

As I have said, Tom resenting this, Lady Alice lost one of her partners; but, as Tom's dancing was rather bear-like, she probably did not much feel her punishment. The sequel of the tale was that, some twelve months after, she told me the story as a good one against herself. "Fancy a strange boy, just introduced, coming up and asking to take me to supper! I declare I lost my head, it was so funny."

We were in a break driving to covert, and Lady Alice had flirted with me prodigiously the night before, and seemed quite willing to continue the amusement still.

"I suppose you never looked at him?"

"Looked at him, Mr. O'Connor! if I had I should have burst out laughing, his impertinence was so charming; and where would my dignity have been then?"

"Oh, I only asked because, you see—the impertinent youth happened to be me!"

But I must return to my first Ascot Week. The mess dinner on the opening night was marked by an incident that occasioned some amusement. The champagne was strong. I was excited and obliging, and never dreamed of saying "No" to the numerous applications to drink wine with me, nor suspected anything in the nature of a plot against my sobriety. So it happened that when the table had been cleared, and the bottles placed thereon before the officer on duty, I was ripe for anything, and particularly suited for the amusement of others.

"Now then, Jock, go on," said the Ensign on one side of me.

"Go on!" echoed he on the other side.

"Now, then, O'Connor," said a grave Captain opposite; "we are all waiting for you."

"To do what? To say grace?" I asked, wondering whether it was a sudden cold that made my voice so husky and strange, and whether that also was the cause of the indistinctness of the said Captain's outline, and of the far-off sound of his remark.

"Why, to propose the Colonel's health."

I should mention that the Colonel, lately exchanged from another regiment, was of the order of men who think that the frequent assertion of it improves and magnifies their dignity, and who mistake the assumption of greatness for the real article.

"'PosetheColonel'shealth!" I observed, all in one word.

"Yes, of course—don't you know it is the right thing? In Ascot Week the junior

honorary member of the mess always does so. You should have prepared a speech beforehand. However, I daresay he won't be particular. Go ahead!"

"Go ahead!" said the Ensign on my right.

"Go ahead!" cried the Ensign on my left.

"Quite sure I must?" I demanded, with the calmness of despair.

"Quite sure—of course—couldn't possibly help it," were heard all round.

Then some one knocked with a spoon upon the table, somebody gave me a push, and, as I arose, I became aware that my chair was taken away from under me.

It was neck or nothing, and I began:

"Gentlemen—"

Thunders of applause at my end of the table, and at the other a vision of several surprised faces and of one very angry-looking red one.

"I rise propose Colonel's health. Long

life to the Colonel. May he live long and prosper—may ——"

"What does this mean?" thundered a voice from the other end of the table. "Sit down, sir. What's his name?"

"O'Connor," I heard, just as I sat down with a bump upon the floor.

"Take him away!—a most disgraceful exhibition!—take him away! Take him to bed! I shall write to Colonel Hendry to-morrow morning. I have no notion of such impertinence! Take him away!"

And taken away I was, struggling manfully, by three stalwart Ensigns in ecstasies of laughter at the success of the joke.

"It's a court-martial, Jock," said one of these Job's comforters as we reached the first landing.

"Go to the devil!" I exclaimed, hurling him away from me. "And I'm not going to bed—I'm going to Rattino's to-night."

My captors had had enough of fighting

with me—for I was strong and determined —and consented to a compromise. It was agreed that I should stay in my room, enjoying a bottle or two of soda-water, until ten o'clock, when it was the custom of the C. O. to return to his room, and that then I might descend, in plain clothes, and make one of the party which was to sally forth and tempt fortune at the hazard-table so kindly provided by a philanthropic gentleman who went by the name of Rattino —his real cognomen being Ratt.

I carried out my part of the compact, and at eleven o'clock we drove off in two flies to the back street where the Signor entertained.

The scene that met my eyes within, when I could see through the dense clouds of tobacco-smoke, was striking enough; but a gambling-table has been described *ad nauseam*, and a hazard-table in Windsor differed but little, as far as the passion to which it gave rise is concerned, from the

roulette or rouge-et-noir table of old Homburg and Baden.

One figure struck me particularly. A pale, aristocratic face, young, yet with many of the lines of age about it—lines wrought by dissipation, and perhaps by anxiety which no one knew of, added to by remorse which none suspected; an enormous cigar stuck in one corner of the well shaped mouth; a hat tilted almost at right angles on one side, and making you wonder at the skill with which it kept on; two large and intelligent, if somewhat sunken eyes watching the dice as they fell; and two white hands, trembling, but not with excitement, taking in and paying out the counters that represented money—that represented more than money to that man of high lineage and great estate; that represented the ruin of an old family; the laying low of many a mighty oak; the enriching of many an Israelitish speculator on human folly.

Even to me, young as I was, half drunk as I was, it was sad to see that pale young aristocrat hopelessly drinking and gambling away a life that but a few short seasons ago had seemed so full of happiness and promise.

One other face attracted me before I bought counters—following the example of those with whom I had come—and sat down to play a game of which I was absolutely ignorant. It was that of a man of middle age, with strikingly handsome, regular features, a black moustache, and dark eyes of singular brilliancy. As I looked at him, he happened to raise them, and I felt a thrill run through me; while at the same time a dim recollection of having seen them before came across my brain. Where? I could not think, and soon I was deep in my first gamble, perplexedly wondering why I lost and why I won, but taking good and bad fortune with the stoical composure I knew to be *en règle*.

At last the box came to me, and I called and threw mains with all the cheerfulness of youth and ignorance, until I became aware of the fact that I had lost a very large sum of money, besides being in debt to Mr. Rattino for about as much besides. Then a hand was put on my shoulder, and, turning, I was confronted with the dark eyes of the man I mentioned as having attracted me on entering the room.

"That's good enough for one night, my boy," said he, in a low tone.

"What the devil is that to you?" was my retort; for the interference of a stranger seemed to me unwarrantable.

"A good deal. I take an interest in you. Don't lose more than you can pay. It's not honourable, and, besides, it's deuced uncomfortable next morning. You've lost about three times your year's income now. Come away; I'll walk home with you, and we'll shake off the atmosphere of this hole in the fresh air, and have some nerves left

wherewith to spot a winner to-morrow. Come along."

There was something so winning in his manner, so pleasant in his expression, his whole demeanour seemed so free from all desire to unduly interfere with my rights as a free and emancipated grown-up man like himself, that I yielded incontinently, and in a few minutes, after a tender "good night" from Rattino, found myself walking down the Castle Hill, puffing at one of my companion's excellent cigars.

"To chuck away money at a game you don't know is wasting wilfully one of the chief blessings of life—excitement. When you have learned hazard, the king of games of chance, you will then be able to enjoy it; at present you are simply throwing good money into Mr. Rattino's pocket, and gaining no pleasure from the amusement. One of the great faults of youth is to only half understand what youth's pleasures are. Even in their vice young men are fools; for

vice properly managed is delicious. Vice mismanaged is not much better than virtue."

I laughed foolishly, though what at I scarcely knew. Most of my intellect was taken up in hiding from my companion that I could only with great difficulty steer a straight course. Already two or three times I had lurched up against him, and, as he appeared not to notice it, I nursed the hope that he supposed the erratic steering was on his side.

"There are two great pleasures in this life," he went on, after turning curiously to scan the face of a woman who flitted by; "gambling and women. Though they are not to be compared one with the other. Gambling is the only *passion*, properly so-called. It absorbs all your faculties. In a really good fit of it the end of the world might come, but you would hold your cards or throw your dice till the consuming fire reached you; you would play on while your leg was being cut off; you would play on

though all your dearest friends were dying; you would almost rather starve yourself than give up any precious time to meals; and you only eat for the purpose of coming back fresh to the table. Do you, can you, ever feel this for a woman? Pshaw! a cold in the head cools your love; the gout for the time kills it altogether. Still women are very nice things, properly made use of. But what I was going to impress upon you was this. Both these pleasures are spoiled by what some idiots have put down as a pleasure *per se*—wine. If you hadn't been drunk to-night, for instance——" I tried to murmur an indignant denial, but he took no notice, and continued, "If you hadn't been drunk you'd have got plenty of amusement out of this evening. As it is you get none. You've lost a lot of money which you can't spare, and you haven't even learned the game of hazard!"

At this moment we reached the gate of the barracks, and then, as we were about

to part, I managed to put a question which had been trembling on my tongue for some time.

"You know my name," I said; "but somehow—although I seem to remember you—I cannot quite remember——"

"My name?" he said, with a peculiar smile. "Yes, I knew your name; and you *have* seen me before. I am Bayley North."

CHAPTER VII.

ASCOT.

"TWO to one bar one!" "Two ponies I'll take!" "Here! I'll lay agin anything!" "I'll bet against some of these outsiders!" "Two to one bar one!" "What do you want to do, my Lord?"

"What do you bar?" I asked, complacently, trying my best to look as if I were an old Turfite and had not only just learned the meaning of that mysterious expression.

"Flavius," replied the ringman, as if he were confiding to me an important secret. Flavius, then, was to be the winner, said I to myself; and out came my new betting-

book, with my name and the name of my club in clear characters on the back thereof.

"Two ponies—Flavius. Make it centuries, Colonel." At first I thought he alluded to the time it would take me to pay if I lost, but immediately remembered that "centuries" was the turf word for hundreds—a very fair specimen of racing humour.

"All right—two hundred to one—Flavius."

And the first bet was inscribed upon the virgin pages of my betting-book.

It was the first race of the meeting. I mounted to the top of the stand, armed with a pair of glasses and a card. Two hundred pounds, after my tragic hazard the night before, meant a great deal, and my hand shook as I strove to make out where the favourite was as they came into the straight. There were only five horses in it, and he was fourth.

But what a fool the jockey was! I felt as if I could have done better myself. The two leading horses have a set-to. Crack go the whips. The ring shout, but my whole thoughts are with that chestnut horse calmly pulling up in the rear. Pulling up, as I live! Flavius is last, and I have lost my first bet in a horse-race.

Sadly descending for champagne, I ran against Colonel North.

"Ah! O'Connor, how do you feel? A little chippy after last night, eh? No? What a thing it is to be young! But don't do it too often. Every night you drink one B.-and-S. too many, you discount so much of your most valuable possession—that same youth. Didn't I see you betting just now—not on that rascally-run race, I hope?"

"I backed Flavius," said I, sadly.

North looked at me pityingly.

"My dear boy, did you know anything of Flavius?"

"No."

"Had you ever seen him before?"

"No."

"Or looked into Ruff for his performances?"

"No."

"Or asked his owner, or trainer, or anyone connected with the stable?"

"No."

"Then why the deuce did you back him?"

"Well—you see—he was favourite—and I thought——"

The Colonel interrupted me with a calm smile.

"Let me give you a bit of advice, my boy. Never back the favourite in a small race—unless you know something. They have a wonderful knack of not winning; and, as to Flavius being the favourite here, he was not. You could get eight to one about him."

"Eight to one! Why, I only got two."

"Two for an eight-to-one chance, and the

horse not meant! Well, I suppose you will learn, but certainly it seems to me that you——"

"That I am a fool?" I asked, bitterly; but he had turned away to speak to a very shabby-looking individual who appeared to be burdened by some tremendous secret.

I sauntered away, feeling that existence was rather wearisome, and wondering dreamily whether I should have much difficulty in raising the money I required; and soon found myself among the coaches, on which the greatest event of the day, to the ladies at least—luncheon—was going bravely forward.

"Hullo, O'Connor!" said a voice from above me. "Come up and eat. You're wanted here."

I looked up, and recognized Sir Arthur Holderly, one of the senior members of the Four-in-Hand Club, and generally reputed to be the best judge of horses and women in London. Attired in the regulation brown

coat, with an enormous flower in his button-hole, and the sprucest wig that could be bought for money on his head, he was in his glory; and beside him on the box-seat was—Lady Monymusk!

"Yes, come up and tell me all about the race, Mr. O'Connor," she said, in that ringing voice which made my heart beat fast. "All these people are so greedy that they will think of nothing but champagne and lobster salad, and I want to know what is going to win the Cup."

I certainly did not at that moment feel very well qualified to assist her; but, nothing loth, I climbed up to the seat behind her, and straightway entered a seventh heaven and utterly forgot my miseries—races, Jews, hazard, Rattino, and all.

There are some women who have in them a faculty of constantly surprising you; of awakening in you emotions you did not know you possessed, and which can be stirred by no one but themselves. Seen

a ball-room, you would say that Gertrude Monymusk is so best seen, glittering in diamonds and in all the witcheries of artistic dress. Seen in her plainest costume, walking along a muddy country road, you could declare to yourself that your impression had been wrong, and that it was so she looked her very best; while at night again you would return to your former belief. Seeing her sad, you could not help owning that sadness became her sympathetic face better than any other emotion could become it; hearing her silvery laugh, you would swear that such music should never cease, and that a sigh from her would be a sadness to all. She could be caressing, and you adored; haughty, and you worshipped; wilful, and you would bend your neck to place it under her fairy foot; soft, and you melted into a tenderness you little dreamed your nature was capable of. That men should love her surprised me little. That they could go about their daily amusements

and occupations without gaining her love did surprise me. The world was all Gertrude Monymusk to me. There were other things, it is true; but they were all only adjuncts to the one grand, sweet, all-absorbing fact —she existed!

How long I sat there and what I said I do not know, but I am certain that she read my secret easily enough, and I scarcely think it displeased her. My failure for so long to see her was easily accounted for.

"Monymusk has been ill for a longer time than usual, and I have not time to see even my most intimate friends when he is ill."

"I wish I were an intimate friend," I remarked, stupidly.

"Do you think intimacy is reckoned by time, by the number of years one has known a person?" she asked—and Heaven only knows what I should have replied had not a voice at my elbow interrupted us.

"How do you do, Lady Monymusk?

O'Connor, I want to speak to you if you can spare time."

Colonel North was the speaker, and I hated him at that moment with an unholy hatred, but complied.

"Look here," he said, when we were on the ground; "you have plenty of time for spooning elsewhere. It's ruinous work on a racecourse, particularly when you have to get money back. How do you propose to pay what you lost last night and this morning?"

"Oh, the Jews, I suppose," I answered, vaguely, trying to see what Lady Monymusk was doing.

"No, no, it's too soon to come to that game. I have a better way. Ringwood is going to win the next race."

"Is he?" I asked, a little incredulously, for the Colonel announced this as if he were affirming that it was a hot day, or that Queen Anne was dead.

"Yes. I have certain information. He

is at five to one. If you like, I'll put you a monkey on—I am going into the ring now."

I hesitated. A "monkey"—£500—more lost would be disastrous.

"It's about the best thing I've come across for a long time," said he, a little impatiently; "you can trust to my knowledge."

So I assented—he departed—and I climbed over again to Lady Monymusk's side.

"How long have you known Colonel North?" she asked.

"I only made his acquaintance last night; he seems a very good-natured fellow."

She smiled—an odd smile—and said—

"I suppose they are all good-natured fellows to you now; but—don't think it impertinent of me—don't trust anyone, not even Colonel North—too far. Are you rich?"

"No—only a second son—and my brother's not what you would call rich."

"Oh!" She seemed puzzled, and the subject dropped, as several talkative people, little suspecting my homicidal feelings regarding them, insisted on taking up Lady Monymusk's attention. But it seemed to me, although she laughed and talked pleasantly enough with these people, that there was a *nuance* in her manner to me—a something of sympathy, of comprehension, of together-drawing (if I may so express it) —which was lacking in her manner to others. Her conversation with them was not free from the artificiality that all such talk must have; with me she seemed utterly and entirely natural and real.

She was, perhaps, the first woman, not a relative, with whom I had felt quite at my ease. No wonder I loved her, for amid all the joys and glories of youth there is not one so strong as to make us quite forget that awful bugbear, *mauvaise honte.*

Shyness scarcely expresses it, and, indeed, the French expression is inadequate to

shadow forth its agony. I believe there are moments of his existence when the self-conscious young man—just escaped, or hardly escaped, from hobbledehoyhood—would gladly welcome a leap down a yawning chasm to escape the horror of his false position; and I have been myself assured by a young gentleman not given to early hours or weak potations, that if he had often to breakfast with the ladies at a country-house he should commit suicide: and that he would far rather face all his creditors at once than the battery of amused eyes opposite him when struggling to induce his erratic hand to convey the clattering cup to his parched lips. Tom Sackton—who was rather of this class—was wont to classify the ladies he met in country houses according to a peculiar scale of his own. There were the "one-B-and-S. women," the "two-B.-and-S. women," and I believe some sarcastic ladies who reached the "three" class; meaning that this amount of Dutch courage was

required by him before he—jaded and tobacco-worn—could face their fresh prattle and inquisitorial glances at the morning meal.

With Lady Monymusk you felt that, although your hand were ever so unsteady, and whatever tales your glassy eye might tell, you were sure of a sympathy devoid of sarcasm, or of that pity which is worse than sarcasm. She was a woman all over, soft and loveable, and men and women all alike bore testimony to her seductive nature.

But, while I sat on the coach drinking in draughts of love, the bell had rung, the preliminary canters were over, and all were eagerly awaiting the start for the last race of the day.

Five monkeys—two thousand five hundred pounds! It was an enormous stake for me—indeed, for anyone—to have on a single race, and that not an important race; but the days I write of were the days of plunging—days which ended in the dissipa-

tion of many a large estate, the ruin of many a high-spirited young aristocrat.

As the cry arose, "They're off!" I almost forgot my companion, while I looked for the colour of the horse on which what was to me a fortune depended. There he was, going well within himself, fourth. Ha! The leading horse has shot his bolt. Ringwood is third. But they are getting near home; why does not my jockey bestir himself? That big chestnut in front is going strong and well, and is bestrode by the best rider of the day. It is the favourite, and the cry goes up, "The favourite wins—the favourite wins!" It is a splendid race; you could cover the three with a table-cloth. The great jockey raises his whip, so does the boy on the bay, and as he does so I see at once that his chance is hopeless, for his animal swerves towards the rails and is "out of it" in a second.

Ringwood's rider sits as still as a statue, and his knee must be touching that of the

other jockey—they gallop as if the two horses were glued together—both whips are going now. The excitement is intense. "Ringwood! the favourite! the favourite! Ringwood!" echo in the air as the partisans of either animal yell themselves hoarse. They pass the post amid a roar of voices. "A dead heat," is on every tongue. I am almost too excited to look at the telegraph-board.

"Can you see the number, Lady Monymusk?" for, with steady hand, she has raised her glasses. "Ringwood's number is seven."

"And seven is hoisted!" Was it chance, an accident, that as she put down the opera-glasses her hand rested for a moment on mine, which was trembling with excitement.

"I congratulate you, Mr. O'Connor; but don't get too fond of betting, and don't take Colonel North's advice in everything. Here he comes, beaming with success. I

daresay he has won a great deal of money."

"Well," said Colonel North, mounting on the coach and pouring himself out a glass of champagne; "well, we pulled it off, you see; but it was an uncommon near thing. Murphy waited just a little too long; if he had let Ringwood out at the bend we should have been spared that bit of excitement, and minutes like those shorten one's life. I feel as if I had at least three more grey hairs than I had before the race."

"It is a pity to waste so much emotion on such a thing as whether one horse can gallop a little faster than another, is it not?" asked Lady Monymusk, and I noticed that she was deadly pale, and that her lips trembled.

"What is there in life more worthy of emotion—woman, do you think?" He spoke roughly, and without the polish that usually marked him, for Bayley North's manners were esteemed perfect.

Seeing that several people were below who belonged to the coach's party, I turned to descend; and, as I did so, I was aware that Lady Monymusk said something to him in a low voice, and I heard his reply.

"You are wrong—quite wrong. I will have no interference here, Gertrude—understand that!"

He called her by her Christian name! It seemed strange, considering that they had before seemed to be but acquaintances; and what could he mean by her interference? Had it any reference to me? Revolving these things, I hunted out the regimental coach, and took my place among the merry crew—many of whom had lost several years' income that day, but all of whom were in the wildest spirits—and whirled away back to Windsor town, escaping a series of break-neck accidents by a series of miracles.

Immersed in the intricacies of a pool, I forgot to go to the hell that night, and went

to bed to dream of Gertrude and of the enormous sum of money soon to be placed in the care of an astonished banker.

Alas! the latter part of my dream was not doomed to be verified. Although North put me on another "good thing" that meeting which duly came off, my Turf successes only went to swell the exchequer of Signor Rattino, and on the Saturday I returned to town a sadder, perhaps a wiser man, to seek amongst the haunts of Israel for a few hundreds wherewith to appear at Tattersall's on Monday to "settle."

One thing my first week's "plunging" had done for me. I suddenly, with a certain set of men, leaped into popularity. There is no profession in which there is so strong an *esprit de corps* as that of the gambler.

As great mutual danger attracts people to each other, so does great mutual excitement. Smith and Jones both intently watching the same dice-box as it rattles, or the same card as it is turned, are forced,

by the identity of interest, to love one another.

Watch the meeting of a couple of gamblers next day after a hard night; you would think that at the least one had just confided to the other his deep love for his sister, or had volunteered to back his acceptances for life.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW CHURCH-GOER.

I HAVE had so much to say concerning Lady Monymusk and Colonel Bayley North that I have quite forgotten my host of Park Lane. For, having finished the martyrdom yclept drill, I had now taken up my quarters in dear old Gilbeau's little house, of which he had given up the ground-floor entirely to me. We certainly met but seldom, for his ways and mine were diametrically in opposite directions, and my evenings began just when he was stepping into bed with the French novel which was seldom far from his side, and

with which he was wont to read himself to sleep.

"A comfortable position; two candles and a French novel, and you may defy Fate and forget the sordid, practical world outside," he said. "Why, my dear Mervyn, while you are standing about in tight boots and struggling to understand something of the artificial lying human beings around you, and vainly attempting to extract either amusement or instruction from them, I am reading their inmost souls in the page of the one man who thoroughly understood human nature, Balzac. One of his novels will tell you more than all your own study at first hand would tell in a long lifetime of going out in Society. I thought I knew something, but I find I was a child in knowledge of men and women till I found him out. Fancy living thirty years without having read Balzac!"

And the Colonel shuddered and proceeded upstairs, while I donned my coat,

and, calling a cab, dashed off to some party.

Colonel Gilbeau—or "Old Gil," as I now called him even to his face, he having protested against the formal designation—was blessed with a neat little fortune of some four thousand a year, and, as he had spent but little for many years, it had quite recovered from the ravages of his *jeunesse orageuse*, if indeed there had been any such thing with him. For myself, I was rather inclined to doubt his terrible tales of wild excess and mad passion, which tales were generally brought up to point a moral when any story of my doings came to his ears. And he managed to hear what I was about, having gathered round him a selected circle of old friends, picked up at the solitary Club on the books of which he had kept his name. A bachelor friend with Club ideas and Club morals, but who can give an excellent dinner in his own house, is a *rara avis* in this empty world, and "Old Gil" became marvellously popular with the smart

old gentlemen I used sometimes to meet in the hall of our little house. I looked in upon one or two of their little parties, and was duly impressed with the immense superiority of everything that had been over everything that then was—men, women, horses, clothes, hats, manners—everything, as far as I could see, except morals. From the tales over which they all chuckled I should be inclined to think that we had somewhat improved in this little respect; with regard to all else the *laudator temporis acti* principle came in with a vengeance.

"Look at the young men of the present day," said old General Bullyard, with a fierce snort. "Why, there is not one of 'em who knows how to make love to a woman or to put down a man. Look at that row at the —— Club the other day. In my time there would have been a slight disagreement over the colour of the wall-paper, or the Christian name of the head-waiter, or the number of miles between

Hyde Park Corner and Newmarket, and the two would have gone out like men and settled it. Instead of that, here we have a vulgar brawl, with a black eye, a meeting of a Club committee, a scandal in the papers, a woman's name introduced, lawyers consulted, and a case in the Divorce Court. Damme, sir! if a man will break a Commandment, let him do it like a gentleman, and not like a bargee!" And he glared at me as if I had been one of the heroes of the little fracas alluded to.

To tell the truth, I believe that, when they had not me there to preach at, the dear old gentlemen, casting off their innocent hypocrisy, were more inclined to weep over their lost capabilities of enjoying the present than to magnify the somewhat apocryphal past. The sight of me, young and ardent, in my war-paint, dashing off to scenes which lent the enchantment of distance to their recollections, must have been a little mortifying, no doubt; and, while I longed to get on,

and prayed for that full military moustache which is so long in coming, I little knew how they envied the youth I was so carelessly throwing behind me.

A good many philosophers have remarked upon the celerity with which the pleasantest portion of our existence slips away. In my case I can easily account for the phenomenon. Sign a bill at three months, renew it when due once, twice, thrice, with the sad certainty of having to meet it and its snowball-like accruing interest at the end of the last term, and you will be electrified to find how quickly a year has passed away.

If there were bill stamps and usurers' in the lower regions, eternity could not be considered long there.

* * * * * *

"Mervyn," said Old Gil, coming into my room about noon one morning, and finding me discussing my breakfast, "what's all this about North?"

"What about him?" I asked, my mouth full of sausage.

"They say you and he are friends."

"Yes—why not? He's a capital chap—knows everything and everybody. The most popular man in London."

"And hasn't a friend. You mustn't keep it up."

"Why not?"

He looked a little puzzled for a reply, and then said—

"Your mother doesn't wish it."

"I can't help that. Really, at that distance, my mother can hardly expect to be able to choose my friends. Tell me what harm you know of him."

"I can't say I know very much harm—except that he is utterly unprincipled."

"Do you mean dishonest?"

"Well, not exactly in the sense you mean—dishonest with regard to women."

I looked up, with a laugh in my eyes.

"And what was old Lord Stufferton when

he was the hero of that capital story you all were so delighted with the other day? Not over-honest to little—what was her name—eh?"

"But there are other reasons," said he, rather peevishly.

"Tell me them."

"Do you mean to say, notwithstanding your mother's wishes, you will adhere to this harmful friendship?"

"You haven't proved that it is harmful. Let my mother write and tell me why I am to give up the friendship of a man who has shown me great kindness—extraordinary kindness, in fact."

Old Gil retired discomfited, and soon after I received a long letter from Ballyconor, in which my mother only amplified his reasonless warnings against North, adding, however—

"In the event of your refusing to give him up at once and for ever, I shall consider the necessity of removing you from the

Guards, and, by taking you from London, also taking you out of the reach of his pernicious influence."

I had only just put down this letter when the subject of it entered. He had come to fetch me for a ride in the Park, where I caracolled daily on a lovely hack I had bought from him for about half her value.

Instinctively I attempted to hide the letter I had just laid down.

"You have heard from—from your mother?" he asked, looking straight into my face, very serious.

"Yes."

"I know what she said to you. I want to know what your answer is going to be."

"I don't quite understand——" I began, bewildered.

"No, I daresay not. But, nevertheless, I do know all about it. She wishes you to be no longer friends with me. Is it not so?"

I was obliged to confess so much.

"And you are hesitating?"

"No. I cannot at all understand the dislike my mother seems to have for you. When did you know her?"

"Years ago. My character, whatever it might have been then, has had ample time to alter. When I knew your mother we were both very young."

"And you quarrelled?"

He looked at me strangely for a moment.

"Yes—we quarrelled."

"What about?"

"I scarcely know. The quarrel was not of my making. But it is better not to talk of this, my dear Jock. The question is, what are you going to say to her now?"

"I am going to say that I value your friendship far too well to give it up, unless——"

"Unless what?" he asked, impatiently.

"Unless she gives me ample reason."

"Exactly. Write and ask her for that. You will not surrender your good sense entirely to her in this? It would be absurd.

You are a child no longer; and you are in the world. She is far from it, and can know nothing of me now."

He spoke rapidly, excitedly; and I was naturally flattered.

"Certainly I will not."

"Well, then, will you let me tell you what to write in answer? Say that you have spoken to me about it, and that I will willingly take measures for the ending of our friendship, if she will agree that, first, in justice to me, I should tell you the reason for her wishing this cessation."

"That sounds fair enough," I said, still feeling flattered at his evident anxiety.

"Yes, I think it is. And add this: Say that if she at any time chooses to take measures to remove you from me, such as your exchanging from the Guards, I shall then—again in self-justification—think myself at liberty to tell you the reason of her hatred, and to show you the proofs. Mind you add that—'to show you the proofs.'

Sit down and write before we ride. It is only half-past twelve."

He had obtained a strange influence over me, and I obeyed without scruple, even showing him my letter before I placed it in the envelope. At the end I had written:—"Do clear up this mystery, my dear mother. I am quite at my wits' end to make out what you all mean. First I get vague warnings from my uncle, then Colonel Gilbeau gives me mysterious advice, and no reason for it, and now you. If you have anything against North, except that he is no better than other people, tell me what it is."

"I don't think she will," said he, smiling, as he laid down the letter.

"Because there isn't anything, I suppose. My mother takes very strong likes and dislikes," said I; and very soon we were cantering up Rotten Row.

The answer from Ballyconor did not come for some time, and then it was short and cold:—

"MY DEAR MERVYN,

"I am sorry my wishes are not enough for you without explanation. However, as you are so determined, I withdraw my opposition to your friendship for Colonel North. Arthur wishes me to say that he wants a saddle.

"Your affectionate

"MOTHER."

I did not think much of the fact at the time, having many things to think of; but it struck me afterwards as odd that North should never have evinced any curiosity as to the effect of the letter he had inspired. He came to Park Lane as a matter of course, and I looked in at his chambers as before; and we went racing together and rode together, and shared our amusements, as if we were of the same age, instead of there being some twenty-five years between us.

It was a very good thing for a youngster,

as far as Society goes, being seen so much with Bayley North; and before my first season was over, what with that and Lady Monymusk's marked preference, and my own good spirits and general willingness to oblige, I became as popular as any young man could well wish to be. And to be popular is to be happy. Although not exactly an "eligible," I had my fair share of dining out, and a plethora of parties, balls, picnics at Maidenhead, and all other possible London amusements. With these, added to a pretty constant attendance to my soldier duties, it may be guessed that I did not find time hang heavy on my hands; and the amount of actual physical labour I got through between the time of parade at perhaps eight a.m. and the end of a cotillon at perhaps five o'clock a.m. the following day would have astonished a Radical agitator grumbling at the habits of "the idle classes."

But, amid all my flirtations in ball-rooms and in quiet nooks of the Thames valley, I

was as safe as an ironclad amid a fleet of three-deckers would be. Lady Monymusk absorbed my entire devotion, and, although one or two young ladies tried to shake her on her throne, they soon gave up the attempt as impracticable.

"Old Gil," who of course heard all about it, scarcely knew what to say.

"I'm not sure that it isn't safer for you than to go falling in love right and left with girls without a penny. If an heiress should turn up, I'm sure Lady Monymusk has good sense enough to retire: and otherwise the idea of your marrying for the next ten years is absurd."

"But you don't really suppose there is anything between me and Lady Monymusk!" I exclaimed, with dignified astonishment—although the coupling of our names together afforded me much secret joy. "We are only friends. I am useful to find her carriage and hold her fan—that is all."

The old gentleman looked at me whim-

sically, as if to see how much I meant of this speech.

"No, no, my boy! The husband is the *cavaliere servente* nowadays."

What he meant I could not guess; and at that moment my servant came to say that Colonel North was in my room. "Old Gil" groaned, and I went downstairs.

"Where are you going this afternoon?" asked North, who was ensconced in my most comfortable chair, turning over the leaves of a photographic book crammed with beauties.

"I'm going to church," I replied, colouring—I could not tell why. There seemed something mawkish about going to church when near Bayley North.

"To church!" He gave a low whistle. "Do you often do it?"

A remembrance of some story I had read in my youth of a boy kneeling down to say his prayers the first night at school amid jeers and a shower of slippers came across

my mind: and this time I answered more boldly—

"Every Sunday!"

"Ah!" He said nothing for a few minutes, and then looked up suddenly—"I'll go with you."

If the statue at the top of the Wellington Monument had suddenly come down and volunteered to take my duty at the next field-day in the Park I could not have been much more astonished. However, it would scarcely have seemed polite to say so, and off we set to a church whose modified "highness" and artistic decoration gratified my uneducated sense of the beautiful and fitting.

Looking at my companion at the conclusion of that exquisite hymn, "Nearer to Thee," I was astonished to meet his eyes—with a soft look in them I had never seen before, save when he drew me towards him in my tutor's room at Harreton—bent earnestly upon me; and still more so when

I discovered that they were full of tears.

As we came out he laid his hand on my shoulder for a moment, and I thought I heard the muttered words, "God bless you!"

* * * * * *

"Been to church with Bayley North! I say, you fellows, wonders will never cease. Here's Jock declaring that Bayley North's been to church!"

General astonishment and incredulity on the part of the other Club members present, until one, a philosopher of nineteen, removes a portentous cigar from his lips and settles the matter.

"Gone to look after some pious woman, you may be sure. There's no better moment to take 'em than when they're touched up by religious hysterics."

CHAPTER IX.

DINNER IN HERTFORD STREET.

"WHAT are you going to do to-night?" said Bayley North to me one day as he was sitting in my room.

I blushed. Why I should have blushed because of my engagement to dine with the Monymusks I know not; but the fact remains. North looked at me curiously.

"Don't tell me if you——"

"Oh, no!" I broke in, annoyed beyond measure with myself; "it's no secret. I'm going to dine in Hertford Street with the Monymusks."

He smiled.

"Have you met him yet?"

"No."

"You have a treat in store for you. He is like an ogre of a fairy tale; or the Beast that married Beauty, minus the future transformation into a prince."

"She is very lovely, isn't she?" I asked, with the youthful desire to hear praise of the queen of my heart.

"Yes, Gertrude Monymusk is a pretty little thing. But don't get too deep there. You'll never get out if you don't take care. Two or three fellows have gone under altogether, and you're impressionable, Mervyn."

"Oh, we're only friends, you know—quite Platonic," I answered, delighted at the implied flattery.

"Ye—es," he said, meditatively, drawing at his cigar. "Ye—es, I don't see any harm in it up to a certain point. But remember one thing—you are a good-looking, agreeable boy, run after by women, and

well worth catching; but never dream that you will minister to anything more than my Lady's vanity. She's got as much heart as this cigar, which, by the way, doesn't draw. Give me another."

"How do you know?"

He stared as he cut off the end of another of my monsters.

"How do I know? How long do you think I have been going about London?"

"Yes, that's all very well; but no amount of that would tell whether a woman had a heart or not."

"Well, she may have; it hasn't been stirred yet, at all events. Listen a moment and I'll tell you her history. She is the daughter of a parson in Somersetshire, where the Tillifruries have a small place, you know. Well, when she was seventeen, she went to a ball at Bath, and there she met Bob De Vere, a young gentleman in the —th Hussars, with some thousands a year for income. He proceeded to fall head

over ears in love with her, and a match was arranged. It was pretty good for her, as she had two or three sisters, and he had hopes of some more money from an uncle. The uncle was a queer chap, and to give his consent to the marriage (which meant leaving Bob his money) he required him to sell out. Bob was desperately fond of the service, and the idol of his regiment. He hadn't made any friends outside it, and in the interval between his selling out (for he obeyed the stern uncle) and the time fixed for his marriage he was like a fish out of water. I met him one day on the steps of the Rag, and a more forlorn spectacle I never encountered. Well, about a week before the wedding-day, young Monymusk went down to Somersetshire and met *la belle* Gertrude. I think it was at a croquet party. Anyhow she made desperate love to him, and managed, on some plea or other, to get the wedding-day postponed. Before the second date came

she had hooked her fish, and wrote to Bob to say she had made a mistake—that her heart was another's, &c., and that where she gave her hand she must give the other article, that same heart. And so she became Lady Monymusk, prospective Marchioness of Tillifrurie."

"And De Vere?" I asked, not quite relishing the story, but already finding hundreds of excuses for my goddess.

"Oh, Bob went to the bad, lost his money first at play, and then his wits at drink. In a lunatic asylum now, poor chap!"

"It sounds hard," I began; "but all the same——"

"All the same you find plenty of reason for her Ladyship's conduct. Of course you do. So did I at one time, for husbands like Monymusk, when they have pretty wives, are a positive boon to society. But I fancy my Lord fathomed his wife's character pretty soon, and that she hasn't had the

easy time of it she expected. He is simply mad with jealousy, and does the most ridiculous things. There is insanity in his family too, and I never should be surprised to hear that he had cut his wife's or his own throat some night after she has danced twice with some young gentleman—yourself, for instance."

"And is his jealousy the reason why she retires altogether from the world every now and then?"

"Yes. They say he beats her, and then has wild fits of contrite affection, which must be almost more alarming. There was one capital story of his bringing a detective to watch her window from a balcony when he —Monymusk—was supposed to be out of town; and his nearly killing the detective, having forgotten his plot, and fancying him a lover about to enter by the balcony. It's a toss-up whether she gets him into a lunatic asylum before he commits manslaughter. If she does manage it, it will

be curious that one woman should have driven two men into the hands of the mad doctors."

"But she gives him no reason for jealousy?"

North looked at me curiously for a moment, and then replied, with infinite dryness—

"No. Of course not."

"Do you know her well?"

"As well as she can be known. And that is the reason I ventured to warn you against going too far. You are young and credulous, and I don't want you to be made cynical and bitter before it's necessary. The ignorance of youth is the pleasantest thing on earth; and the longer we can keep our teeth from the fruit of the tree of knowledge the better for us. Believe in her smiles, my dear boy; believe her when she tells you that she prefers you just now to all other men; believe her when she recounts all she braves from her husband

for your sake; but do not believe that all this is anything more than the suitable amusement of one or even of two seasons, to be looked back to in after-life pleasantly enough—*if* dropped at the proper time."

"And when is the proper time?"

"Ah, there you have the secret of success in such affairs. I mean success in keeping them altogether sweet, as love affairs should surely be. A man and woman engaged in a *liaison* are playing a very pretty game of skill—the stakes being their peace of mind and self-conceit. And the winner is the one who first detects the signs which tell of the approaching end of the affair, and, instead of waiting for dismissal, promptly bursts his or her bands asunder. The end of these things is desperately bitter—the dregs horribly nauseous. As you should rise, they say, from a dinner-table with appetite still left, so should you break off a love affair with just enough love and regret left to make a firm, wholesome,

lasting friendship. *That's* where the doctrines of Plato come in. As well talk of them at the beginning as lecture a starving man on the ills of dyspepsia. Let a love affair die its own natural death, and what is the result? The one lover is wearied to death, to loathing, by the necessity of simulating a feeling which is gone, until the power of such simulation goes too; and the other is sickened by seeing through the play-acting of the other, and broken-hearted when the truth, long suspected, comes out in its coarse and unfeeling nakedness. There can be no friendship after that, only repugnance and hatred, and the recollection of what has been so sweet remains in the memory as a curse and an injury."

"All this," I said, lying back in my chair, and speaking with all the confident philosophy of youth; "all this may be true enough in ordinary instances; but it is based on the vulgar notion that love can

never be permanent—that there is no such thing."

"There may be; there may exist ghosts and sea-serpents; some one may discover perpetual motion, or a cure for sea-sickness, or an honest horsedealer, or a pretty woman who never looks in the glass. Oh, yes, there may be."

"I feel that there is," I exclaimed, starting from my chair, and walking up and down the room with rapid strides.

"Of course you do; you are young. If you could be permanently young, the feeling would be right. But we have moralised enough. The horses have been here a long time, and it's past one. Your divinity goes home at half-past, so there is not much time."

"Did you lose much money at Ascot?" asked Lady Monymusk, some ten minutes after, as I rode by the side of her exquisite chestnut hack and cast side-glances

at her wondrously graceful figure, seen to superb advantage as she sat square on the saddle.

"No; thanks to North."

"Always North," she muttered under her breath. "How do you come to be such friends?"

"I don't know. He is such good company, you know."

"Yes; so men say—and women, too, for the matter of that. But I never knew him take so much trouble with a boy before. You're not offended?" she asked, with a malicious smile, as she saw a cloud upon my face.

"Oh, no," I replied, with an attempt at *hauteur* which made her laugh again.

"Don't be ashamed of being young, Mervyn," she said, in a low tone, as she pulled her horse up at the corner by Albert Gate. "Now good-bye. You dine, remember, to-night. Don't be surprised if I suddenly say good night to you, and go directly if I do."

She had called me by my Christian name. All North's history was swept away from my memory as if it had never been. And I only remembered that she had called me Mervyn, and that I loved her.

I thought that day would never pass; but at length it was eight o' clock and I could throw myself into a hansom and drive to Hertford Street. There were only a few people in the drawing-room when I entered, one of them, however, being my host, Lord Monymusk. He was a tall, gaunt man, with a profusion of black hair and an unkempt beard. Singularly ungainly in figure and untidy in dress, there was, nevertheless, something about him which bespoke the gentleman; and his greeting of me, though awkward and almost shy, was cordial enough. I noticed that once or twice, when I was talking to other people, his eyes wandered to me, with a curious expression—a mixture of curiosity and defiance. The butler announced dinner.

"We will go in," said the host. "Gertrude is not well—a headache. She will join us afterwards, if possible." And so we went in to dinner, while I wondered and felt strangely disappointed. Was it fancy, or, as I sat down, did I catch Lord Monymusk's eyes fixed upon me with an undisguised look of malignant triumph? I was seated near him, and before long I ventured to say—

"I hope Lady Monymusk is not very unwell? I saw her in the Park this morning, and then she seemed——"

"Sudden headache—subject to them," he said, abruptly; and I felt it impossible to pursue the subject. The dinner was as dull as it well could be. There was a feeling of restraint upon us all, and our host's presence seemed to freeze up the conversation of even Algy Paminto, the great dinner-talker, who was there.

"I don't believe a word of her headache," he said to me, as we walked out of the

house together. "It's one of his jealous fits. He's seen her talking to some man for more than a minute—I believe that is the limit allowed. I think I heard you tell our sprightly host that you were not going to Mrs. Hender's, or I could have given you a lift."

"No. I should have liked to go, if only to see the house; but I'm not asked. I don't know her."

"I do—very well—and can ask anyone I like. Come with me."

"All right," and I followed Algy into his brougham.

Hender House was looking its best, and the ball came up to the reputation of the best house for such things in London. After my fill of dancing, I was roaming through the drawing-rooms—now nearly deserted, as a dance was going on, and the supper-room had just been opened—when, to my intense astonishment, I came face to face with the object of my thoughts—Lady

Monymusk—leaning on the arm of Count Arnetti, one of the foreign attachés.

"You turn up at the right moment, Mr. O'Connor," she said, with a gay smile. "Here's poor Count Arnetti longing to dance, and, instead, being victimised with me doing the round of the Hender pictures. You are released now, Count; I shall continue my lecture on Art to this gentleman. He is younger, and therefore more patient than you are."

"I am sure, to hear Lady Monymusk talk on any subject is a delight—even on one——"

"She doesn't understand—eh? Never mind. I forgive you. Run away to your valse. It is curious," she went on as, with a courtly bow, the Count disappeared, "what a serious thing it is with some of these foreigners to miss a dance. The poor man has nearly died of my love for Art."

"But I thought you were laid up—your headache——"

"I had no headache. At least," she added, noticing my look of surprise—"at least, it was not very bad. I hope your dinner wasn't dull."

"But it was."

"That's rude of you. I asked little Mrs. Montacute on purpose to amuse you."

"She didn't."

I suppose my tone was very gruff, for she burst out laughing, and laid her hand on my arm. The touch made me shiver, and the blood to tingle in my veins.

"Poor boy—is he sulky?"

And she laughed again; but the raillery in her eyes was not unkind and I took courage.

"It was dull because you were not there. Do you think I can look at or think of any other woman?"

This speech out, I held my breath. For less I felt she would be warranted in giving me instant dismissal. But after a little pause, which seemed an age to me, and

during which she played with her fan, she only laughed again.

"What an impressionable youth it is! Does my presence or absence really make any difference to you, Mervyn?"

Again my name—uttered, oh! so softly, it seemed no one had ever known its true pronunciation before. But with all my ardour I was timid, inexperienced, and all I answered was—

"Yes—you know it does—all the difference."

"Let me see—how long have we known one another? What would people say if they knew that, at such a short acquaintance, I allowed you to make love to me? You must think me—I hate the word, but I know no other—a flirt."

"I—think you——" I stammered, quite unable to find words in which to express my scornful repudiation of such a term applied to her.

"Some people say I am, you know. Now, your friend, Colonel North, what has he said of me?"

"Said of you?"

"Yes, tell me. I am one of the few women who can keep a confidence. If you like me, as you say—no, you mustn't hold my hand, some one might come in—you must tell me. What did Bayley North tell you of me?"

No love-stricken youth on earth could have withstood the command of her proud, imperious eyes. I told her the whole story as he had told it to me.

"And you believe all this?" she asked, when I had finished.

There was a mournful inflection in her tone which thrilled me to the heart.

"No, I didn't. I thought it was distorted, exaggerated, untrue."

"It is true that poor Robert De Vere did love me," she said, in a low tone, standing

straight in front of me, and looking into my eyes with an expression that defied disbelief. "It is true that at one time I thought I loved him. But before I ever knew Lord Monymusk I had discovered my mistake, and had told him our marriage was impossible. Then—when I felt very sad and lonely and weary of life, regretting the honesty which had made me throw away what was to me then a good match, for he would have been well off—I met my husband. My father was poor; he urged me for my sisters' sake to accept him. If not exactly 'in love'—some people are never privileged to have that happiness, you know—I liked him as well as in my depressed state I thought I could like anyone. He offered to do very generous things for my father and my sisters, and to help my brother in life. I may have been wrong to give way—I believe I was—but at least there was nothing to reproach me with on the score of Robert De Vere. But, of course,

people who like to talk of women's heartlessness did invent a story about that. And you believed it?"

Her plaintive look touched me. In a moment her little hand was in mine. I drew her towards me; her soft breath fanned my cheek, when suddenly she tore herself away, and, looking round, I saw North, with a partner on his arm, coming slowly up the room.

As he passed us he paused for a moment and said—

"I am so glad to see you here, Lady Monymusk, as I heard you were ill. I met his Lordship just now; came straight from the House. They didn't divide, after all."

"Go," she whispered hoarsely to me, as he passed on; "go—I will return to the ball-room that way. You go straight to the hall and out."

She was deadly pale, and I could see she trembled.

"I will tell you why some day. Go now, only go!"

I hurried downstairs, and at the foot met Lord Monymusk talking to several men. As he saw me I started at the sudden change in his expression. His eyes seemed to shrivel up into two little balls of fire, and his complexion turned a ghastly green. Then I got my coat and walked home, wondering what all this mystery meant, and went to bed and dreamed a dream in which the lovely vision of Gertrude Monymusk was perpetually changing to a demoniacal monster with masses of raven hair, and two jets of fire for eyes.

For a whole week I heard nothing of my divinity, and at the end of that time I had the satisfaction of reading in the fashionable intelligence that "Lord and Lady Monymusk have left Hertford Street for the Continent."

No one seemed to know whither they had gone, and "the Continent" is a large

place. Besides this, I was tied to London by the routine of guard-mounting, field-days, and picquet duty.

CHAPTER X.

A VISIT TO WANDSWORTH.

"MY DEAR NEPHEW,—Come and see me to-morrow. I particularly wish it, as I have something of importance to say. Yours affectionately,

"JAMES O'CONNOR."

This note was put into my hand one morning when I had just come off guard, and, a little interested in my mysterious relative, I abandoned all thoughts of riding in the Park, and proceeded to embark for Wandsworth, after looking into Colonel Gilbeau's room to tell him of my errand.

"Going to see James!" he exclaimed. "By Jove! Are you armed?"

"Armed! Do you think it a service of danger, then?"

"Danger! I believe no one ever emerges alive. It's my belief the old gentleman is a cannibal; but you don't look appetising, my boy—not flesh enough yet. He'll keep you some time to fatten. Seriously, though, I think you ought to make notes; for any publisher in the neighbourhood would jump at an account of a visit to Castle Dangerous, as they call it about there, I am told."

"You must get up a dinner to me as an explorer," said I, laughing; and in a moment I was bowling along behind a little mare, lately picked up, together with T-cart and harness, from one of my brother officers for a mere song.

Given a knowledge of the whereabouts of Wandsworth Common, the finding of Manor Lodge was easy enough. Everyone knew it, and one or two shop-people of

whom I inquired looked at me much as the gentlemen who attended the "levée" Martin Chuzzlewit held ere going to Eden looked at that sanguine gentleman. Nothing of the house could be seen as I drove up to the gate—made of rusty iron, and boarded upon the inside—for it was completely hidden by a wall about fifteen feet high, surmounted by an imposing array of broken bottles, and offering a very substantial resistance to an enemy unprovided with artillery or scaling-ladders. The bell taxed all the strength of my boy—neatest and tiniest of tigers—to pull; and when, by dint of putting his little boots up against the wall, he succeeded in making it ring, it seemed as if it never would cease, so astonished was it at this unwonted frolic. After a time, we heard the undoing of chains and drawing back of bolts, and then the door, creaking horribly, swung back a short distance, and an old man's face appeared in the aperture—a face that might have be-

longed to the very incarnation of suspicion and distrust.

"What do you want?—who are you?"

"You're a nice old chap," replied I, gaily, "and your welcome is delightful. I am the first of a party your master has asked to dance here this afternoon. Nineteen waggon-loads coming, besides the omnibus with the ballet-girls."

The scowl on the old man's face as I chaffed him was perfectly diabolical. With a muttered oath, he was about to close the gate, when I sprang down and managed to get my foot up against it.

"Woa! Not so fast! I've come to see your master, and I'm not going back without seeing him."

"See my master!" The old villain laughed in a fiendish way that would have curdled one's blood in a lonesome place at midnight. "And you think you'll do that, do you, my young gentleman?"

"I'm sure of it, my old friend. Look

here!" and I produced my uncle's note.

He read it in silence, returned it to me, undid the chain he had kept fastened, and opened the door just sufficiently for me to pass through.

I entered a stone-paved courtyard, on two sides of which there ran an inner wall, while on that opposite me stood the house —a square red brick edifice with stone facings, gloomy and uncompromising-looking, with its blinds drawn down, and an undefinable air of death about it that struck a chill into my heart even in the midst of my careless, reckless gaiety.

"He's been expecting you all day," said my guide, fumbling in his pockets for another key, with which he opened the front door.

As I hesitated, the darkness inside being intense, I heard a deep growl, and in an instant an enormous St. Bernard dog leaped out, only, however, to lie down obediently at a word from the servant. The latter

struck a match and lit a solitary jet of gas; and I then, stepping into the hall, found myself surrounded by dogs—dogs of all sizes and breeds, from the Newfoundland to the fox-terrier, from a remarkably well-bred-looking greyhound to a cur whose position with regard to a knowledge of its father must have been humiliating. What struck me as odd in this assemblage was their silence. Some growled, some wagged their tails, many scratched, but not one barked. Silence was evidently the genius of the place, and, unimpressionable as I was, I felt a strange difficulty in speaking in my usual rather loud cheery accents.

"What a lot of dogs! Where does my uncle get them all? Stolen, eh?"

"Upstairs," was all the answer I received, as my guide pointed to the dark staircase.

I ascended, and on the first story he opened a green baize door, which led into outer darkness, and then another beyond, through which I emerged into a long low

room, the walls of which were covered with bookshelves, save at one end, where there was nothing but a curtain of some dark material.

The servant ushered me in, closed the door behind me, and departed, and, just as the last sound of his tread had died away, I became aware of a figure advancing from a corner of the apartment—advancing so noiselessly that, in the half light, it had all the effects of an apparition.

But I was young, of good digestion, and rather devoid of imagination. So I said, boldly enough—

"Is that you, uncle?"

"I am your uncle, James O'Connor. It is a cursed name. Sit down, Mervyn."

These words were said in a short, deliberate manner that seemed to me to hide inward pain. I sat down, and, as my eyes grew accustomed to the semi-darkness, I was able to distinguish my uncle's features. They were eminently handsome, and im-

pressed me with the truth of what I had been told—that he was, in his young days, far better-looking than even my father. The features were regular and clearly cut. There was the same masterful look in the eyes that I had remarked in my father's picture, only more strongly developed. The sternly-set mouth was like that of the portrait, except that it again exaggerated the expression of the latter; and I could scarcely imagine a smile relaxing its fixed look of bitter scorn.

As I observed him, he was occupied in doing the same thing for me; and it was scarcely complimentary to me that when he had finished his survey he sighed deeply, as if much disappointed.

"It was good of you to come," he said at length, with a sort of measured and contemptuous courtesy that checked the light remarks that rose to my lips. "I suppose that you have much of what you dignify by the name of occupation in your life."

"I am sure, my dear uncle," I replied, my exuberant spirits breaking through all restraint, "if you don't call guarding Her Most Sacred Majesty at St. James's Palace occupation, I don't know what you would call it. We are, as you know, on the brink of a revolution; at any moment the *sans-culotte* cabmen of London——"

"You wonder why I have sent for you," he went on, taking no notice whatever of my attempt at humour, "and I will hasten to explain. You have heard me spoken of?"

"Very little. No one seems to know anything of you. I heard you did good."

"Good!" and he started with an impatient gesture. "Good! As if any one man could do good, unless——"

He checked himself suddenly, and changed his manner.

"But I have not brought you up here to talk about social science and what we can

do with our criminals or with our laws or manners. If I get on the subject of injustice I am hard to stop. I brought you here for personal reasons—personal to you as well as to me."

His manner—so calm, so gentleman-like, so dignified—impressed me in spite of myself, and I bowed my head in token that I would listen in silence, which was not a thing I often did.

"Mervyn O'Connor, did anyone—did your mother—ever tell you of the traditions of our race? You need not answer. I see she has not—that no one has. Indeed, I was sure of it before I saw you, from things I had heard of you. You may think it odd that I, cooped up here with my dogs and that old servant, should hear anything of the outer world; but I made some good friends in the old days—friends whom even such eccentricities as mine cannot shake wholly off. They sometimes write to me,

and one of them, only two days ago, wrote that you were—were supposed to be—entangled with a woman."

An indignant denial seemed out of place here. Besides—to speak it low—my self-conceit, with which article most young men are plentifully supplied, was pleased by the thought that I should even be thought of with her. So I said nothing.

"I am partially a believer in predestination; but when I heard this I thought that in justice to you—in justice even to myself—I was bound to give you a chance—the chance of fore-knowledge—of escaping the curse of our house."

"What is this curse?" I asked, looking curiously at his weary eyes.

"I sent for you to tell you that. Hark! Do you hear nothing?"

"One of the dogs howling," I hazarded.

"No; none of my dogs howl. There it is again, distinct and clear!" He rose from his seat with agitation in his face as a sound

as of the wind whistling in the gable of an old house came upon us.

"Wind," I said again.

"Wind! Open the window. Is there a breath stirring?"

I did as he directed. It was perfectly still and calm. There was no sound in the air save the rumbling of a cab and the distant noise of a train thundering along the line.

When I turned back to the room, my uncle was re-seated.

"That means a misfortune to the house," he said, calmly. "Heaven knows we have had enough!"

"Why, Uncle James," I cried, "you don't mean to say that you believe in the old banshee business?"

"Wait!" he said, impressively, motioning me to sit down. "Wait; and now listen. The O'Connors were always a wild race, from the time when they disputed supremacy with the Macmurroughs and other chiefs,

to the tamer days when one of them threw in his lot as an adherent of Queen Elizabeth, and betrayed his country and his cause, for the sake of the bright eyes of a woman who came over with Lord Essex to subdue Ireland. You are not well read enough in Irish history to know of the massacre of Killeagh. Massacres were common enough then, but this was marked by features of extraordinary treachery and cold-blooded cruelty. Our ancestor, Ruadh O'Connor, was the traitor, and, as he was going to his terrible doom, one of his own race—a chieftain's wife, and esteemed a prophetess —turned on him and cursed him. It was for a woman's smile that he had sinned; by a woman's smile he should perish, and by women's smiles should perish all his race. The woman for whom he had lost his soul betrayed him—she had only been acting a part—and he killed her and himself. You know something of your family history since

then—you have heard of the death of Mervyn O'Connor of Ardhaig?"

"He died swimming his horse across a swollen ford."

"Yes, to visit his paramour. You have heard that his son Arthur, the first baronet, who so upheld the family honour and added to the family wealth, died in his bed. I think I could prove—I have, at least, proved to myself—that he was poisoned by a woman he had in early life betrayed. His heir perished in Austria—how was never ascertained. The next O'Connor of our house was killed, as you know, in a duel—about a woman, of course. The next, after a reign at Ballyconor of fifteen years, died of softening of the brain, really mad for love of a woman who scorned him. But I will not weary you with the list. No O'Connor has reached more than middle age—all have died for one reason. To come to later times——"

"Yes," I said, drawing my chair nearer to his; "yes, to come to later times."

"Your grandfather, my father, was found in the lake one morning—dead. He had gone there as usual to feed his wild ducks, and slipped in. Nothing more natural. Few people knew that he met there that morning a woman of the fierce Western blood, to whom he had brought the shame of a nameless child; few people connected with the baronet's death the finding, some weeks after, of a dark-eyed woman's body among the rushes, clasping in her arms a dead child. She had wandered from the high-road and slipped in. Of course. So she was given a pauper's funeral, and he sleeps where you know, with that pompous inscription on his monument. Your father——"

"Yes, my father——"

"Your father died by his own hand."

"Uncle!"

"It is too true. But first let me tell you something more. Years ago I went to Rome. I was young and impressionable as you are. I was a firm believer in woman's love, as you doubtless are. I laughed at the old legends of my family, as you do. I met a woman who seemed to me to embody every earthly possibility of perfection. I loved her madly, devotedly. She swore she returned my passion. She was as false as hell. I discovered one day that she was prepared to betray me for a man whose name I did not know. I determined to surprise them, and I went, bent on revenge, to the meeting-place I had discovered. But my vengeance failed me—the man was my own brother."

"My father!"

"From that hour I believed in the Curse. I left them together; I never saw either again; I never heard from your father again until—until the day before he died. Then

I was revenged; but I no longer wished for vengeance. I only saw in it all the working of the Curse."

"And the woman you both loved?" I asked.

He hesitated.

"No matter. She betrayed us both. She left him—death; and me a life which is almost death. No other woman has heard my voice since; for the moment that I knew I was betrayed, that I escaped so hardly from shedding a brother's blood—for it nearly came to that in my first frenzy—I shut myself from the world. Whether Destiny is satisfied with my expiation, I know not. I suffer here at times such tortures as would befit a damned one. But I hope to die soon."

He ceased. His head sank down into his hands, and he seemed to pray. Then he raised his head, and his face was again calm and dignified in expression.

"I had a portrait of her, painted at Rome

in the days when we were happy. Time after time have I tried to destroy it, but dare not. Thus the Curse is fulfilled with me. Whenever I am tempted to draw aside that curtain"—and he indicated the curtain I had noticed at the end of the room—"I remember; I live through again the misery of that supreme moment when all the light of life went out from me, and left me to live on in darkness and loneliness."

He paused again. At last I broke the silence.

"May I see it?"

"No, not now; perhaps never. Better not. Do you believe what I have told you?"

I scarcely knew what to say. That by living alone and brooding over this fanciful family legend his brain had given way, I did believe.

"Are you sure about my father?"

"Sure! Mervyn, I never told a lie in my life. Your poor father wrote to me the

very night he put an end to his existence, telling me of his intention, and telling me its cause."

He took a letter from a desk near him, and, turning down a portion, held it towards me to read, having previously lit a candle.

I read these words—

"The Curse is true, brother. She has ruined both our lives. You have the strength to live. I have only enough to die. Forgive me for any harsh words I used that day. I wish I could shake your hand again. But—I must die to-night. Good-bye. Your brother,

"ARTHUR."

"But this woman!" I cried, bewildered. "Who was she? My father was on the point of leaving his regiment and coming home. He——"

"Do not ask more, Mervyn O'Connor. But let me say that now of which all this has only been the preliminary. Are you

about to allow a woman to wreck your life? It may be that the Curse may die out. It may be that it can be broken by strength and determination. This woman —cast her off—fly her! Save yourself, Mervyn O'Connor! Save yourself, my poor boy, ere it is too late."

He rose as he spoke, and a light of affection came into his eyes.

"And Arthur?" I asked, avoiding the subject.

"Arthur? He is in less danger than you. From what I hear, as well by temperament as by position, he is safer. Mervyn, it is of you I now speak. Save yourself while there is time. Give up this boyish infatuation. Be brave. Break down the Curse at last that has been the ruin of our house."

"I am in no danger," I said, thinking it was time to escape from this madman, to whom it would have been no use to talk of Plato.

"No danger! Is it not true that you think only of one woman—that you——"

"My dear uncle," I said, rising and taking up my hat, "you have been strangely misinformed. A lady—a married lady—is kind enough to be my friend; and for me to think of her even in the manner you indicate would be an insult to her. It is still more so to discuss such a possibility with anyone. I must decline to do so. I do not, I own, believe in family legends, banshees, family ghosts, or curses. What you have told me about my father is very sad and very terrible. I only wish——"

He interrupted me.

"Boy, your incredulity will be your ruin. But I can say no more. No words of ruin, I see, can avert the working of Destiny. I will detain you no longer."

I escaped, and, as I emerged into the sunshine, felt as if I were coming out of prison.

The story I had heard did not fail to

make an impression on me; but my natural buoyancy of spirits soon came to the rescue, and as I sent my little mare along Park Lane I had nearly forgotten all my uncle's gloomy prophecies.

In the hall of our house Colonel Gilbeau met me. There was misfortune in his face.

"What is it?"

"Come in here, Mervyn—prepare for a shock. Your poor brother Arthur has had an accident; he is very badly hurt—very badly!"

"Arthur! Oh, God! But there is hope—say there is hope!"

"There is no hope, my poor boy—none."

"Not dead? Not dead?"

"Yes—dead."

CHAPTER XI.

SIR MERVYN.

NEXT, perhaps, to our first love our first loss is the principal epoch in our lives. Just as the heart becomes more and more callous to Cupid's prickings, and bears calmly at the age of thirty a coldness from Julia which at twenty-five would have caused instant suicide, so does it after a time learn to philosophise over Death; perhaps, who knows? secretly trying to allay fears which intrude themselves concerning the day when itself shall cease to beat.

When old Tomkins passes away, and his [redacted] no more, the

thought really uppermost in the mind of his two cronies, old Bobkins and old Johnkins, is that their "Poor fellow! I always told him that, if he didn't take care and have medical advice, he would go suddenly," or "What else could such over-doctoring and coddling result in?" &c., are all humbug; that what the dear prosy fellow died of is just age; and that they, too, who are temporarily left, are as sick of this as he.

When your pious elderly lady hears of her friend's death, and, scarcely pausing in her needlework, ejaculates, "All flesh is grass; we are here to-day and gone to-morrow!" what is she doing in that tough old heart of hers but striving, by dint of a wordy philosophy, to stifle the terror of dying also which has arisen there?

The fact is that dying is to many people a kind of disagreeable fable—a fairy-tale ogre which may be salutary in story, but is really of doubtful existence. We can imagine the death of any friend and relative.

Poor Jones! Did you notice his colour and hear him cough? He is not long for this world! And how Brown lives at all is a mystery! Two fits already; a third will do it! All this time we never dream that Jones and Brown, hob-nobbing in the Club smoking-room after we have gone, are exchanging confidences as to the certainty with which they prognosticate our own demise before the year is out.

It is morbid, you say, kind and genial reader, to dwell upon that one certainty of Life—Death. Why? If we are, after a lapse of no matter how long a time, going to a certain country—say to emigrate to America—should we not often think of what outfit must be bought, what friends we should persuade to come with us, what route we should take, what capital is required, and the rest of it? And all this should we do for a doubtful contingency; for we might change our minds, or come into a fortune, or be made Prime Minister,

or go mad and become a successful poet, or take to thieving and be sent to penal servitude.

Now we most decidedly shall die; and it is morbid to think of this, or make arrangements to meet it. Is it?

But the idea of a subaltern in the Army preaching a sermon is preposterous, and I apologise. My excuse must be that the loss of my brother Arthur was very great, and even yet, after this lapse of time, is sadly fresh in my memory.

Every incident of our boyish life together came before me as I travelled from London towards my home; and the newspaper I held before me and vainly strove to concentrate my attention upon was wetted with tears of which I need not have been ashamed. "I was a very happy man," has said some writer, "as long as I could cry." Oh, the tears of youth, how soon their source becomes dried up!

Every incident in that sad journey stands

out distinctly before me now—the commercial traveller who made such terrible jokes over his whisky and water in the steamer's saloon; the yellow-faced lady who tied up her face as you tie up the face of a corpse and proceeded to be sea-sick before we had cast off from the pier; the plucky amateur sailor who walked on the upper-deck smoking a black cigar defiantly, and gazing over the side to leeward when no one was looking; the "National" newspaper I purchased on landing. By-the-by, I preserved this last, and it may divert the reader to see a copy of it.

The time, I should premise, was one of disturbance in Ireland—a not very unfrequent occurrence, I have heard. Fenians were marching up and down; rents were being refused; "the land for the people" was being demanded, and in a few instances the old remedy of "an ounce of cold lead" had been exhibited in the case of landlords

suffering from too great love of their rents.

This was the article which, even in the midst of my grief, compelled from me a smile as I journeyed past the wearisome line of "Ladies' Bathing Places" and "Gentlemen's Bathing Places," which constitute the landscape on one side of the railway from Kingstown to Dublin:—

Irish Sport.

(*From our Special Sporting Correspondent.*)

"Although it must be confessed that Jupiter Pluvius has of late honoured our fair isle with a special amount of attention—until the banks are wet and unpleasant to hide behind, and the evenings almost too moist for waiting out in the dusk—still there has been some decidedly fair sport in this part of the country, and experienced sportsmen have brought some very fair game to bag.

Landlords are certainly wild and strong on their cars, and the curse of this noble

sport—absenteeism—is again showing itself; while agents—which game is very plentiful and quite free from the disease, being of an entirely different species (as I shall point out in my forthcoming great work, "Landlord Hunting in the Green Isle")—are savage, and, in some few instances, when brought to bay, have injured inexperienced hunters. It may be as well, while on the subject, to mention, for the benefit of your young readers, a few of the rudimentary rules of this noble sport.

Imprimis, meeting a landlord in the open is simple foolhardiness. There are certain rules, handed down from generation to generation of sportsmen, and I cannot too strongly insist that any infraction of them will lead to unnecessary danger. First, ascertaining the habits of your quarry—where he collects rents, where he stops to lunch, and so on—you must build up an obstruction in his track, so as to bring him to a full stop and give you the necessary time for careful aim-

ing. You yourself, hidden by the growth on the top of a bank, should be entirely unseen, and should, moreover, previously select a nice rest for the muzzle of your gun. Aim at the face—it is the landlord's most vulnerable part, for every Irish schoolboy knows that he has no heart—and load with a few old nails and such things among the swan-shot. Landlords, when brought to bay, being very savage, you should never attack one with less than half a dozen assistants to finish off the game, if only wounded sufficiently to make a resistance. Battering on the head with the butt of a gun or a thick stick is the best way of doing this.

There is no necessity for gralloching.

Now a few words as to a dispute that has of late arisen between several of our leading sportsmen as to the permissibility of "firing into the brown," if you happen to come upon several of the brutes together.

I have taken some pains to collect valua-

ble opinion on this subject, and have come to the conclusion that, in the judgment of the majority of those who have a right to speak, the practice is condemned as unsportsman-like and unworthy of an Irish hunter.

On the other hand, laying rent in a field and watching it at night is quite permissible, while the silly old prejudice that forbade shooting a landlord sitting, and insisting on your waiting till he ran, has quite died away.

In conclusion, let me tell young Ireland that it can in no better way pass its leisure time than in this noble sport. Exaggerated ideas of its danger having been spread by timorous spirits, or by those unpatriotic men who think it sufficient for a thing to be Irish to decry it, I will assert, without fear of contradiction, that, if proper precautions be only taken, it requires about as much courage, and involves as much personal risk, as pigeon-shooting or rat-hunting. In

answer to a correspondent, who asks what he is to do about a tame—or popular—landlord in his part of the country, I should be inclined to say—shoot him at once. They are treacherous animals when tamed, and at the rutting—or renting—season have been known to attack the kindest of tenants.

One more hint, and I have done. Never shoot an agent when a landlord is to be had, even though the latter may only appear at long intervals. You might as well stalk a caribou when a moose is in the neighbourhood."

I pass over the few weeks during which I stayed at Ballyconor. My mother was terribly cut up, and refused to be comforted. It appeared that Arthur had managed to lose his heart to a girl in the neighbourhood, daughter of a squire of high degree but low purse, and was continually cantering over the seven miles that separated his

place from Ballyconor. It was coming home from courting that he met with his accident. Taking a short cut by the fields in the dusk, he galloped into an open drain, his horse turned head over heels, and my poor brother was picked up by a shepherd some hours after, cold and dead, with his neck broken.

And to my mother the worst part of the whole affair was that on that very day she had had hard words with her son—the first quarrel that had ever occurred between them. The particulars came to me from Jim Leary. Arthur declared his unalterable affection for Madge Macfinegan; Lady O'Connor—to his intense astonishment, which he confided to the agent—lost her temper, vowed that nothing should ever persuade her to give her consent, reproached him with ingratitude, with deceit in trying to make her—his mother—believe that he never cast a thought to women, and ended by declaring that she would leave his home

unless he, within twenty-four hours, gave up his mad—his "fatal" passion.

"And why your poor dear lady mother should have called it fatal, bedad I don't understand. But she'd made up her mind that Arthur was a—what do you call it?—an anchorite, and didn't care more for the dance of a girl's eye than you, you young scamp, cared for the larning I tried so hard to drum into your curly head," said Jim Leary, as we sat together one night in that poky little chamber called the "smoking-room," and he took an extra glass of toddy in honour of the sad occasion.

Then Arthur, for the first time in his gentle, quiet life, in a passion, called for Norah, his bay mare, and dashed over to Castle Macfinegan, with a resolute look on his sweet face—and never came home alive.

What did it matter to me, or to anyone, that Madge married in five months' time a *buckeen* not fit to clean my brother's buck-

skins? She had, perhaps, made Arthur happy, as she seemed to him idealised by his pure imagination; and I was grateful even for that, and could not share, or scarcely understand, the vindictive hatred towards the girl which Lady O'Connor displayed afterwards.

But then it must be remembered that I was young and imaginative, and that I also had an ideal—a soft woman, with sentimental eyes, whose image had crossed the Channel with me, and came between me and all the duties which I—as become head of the house—had to undertake—came even between me and my grief for Arthur.

I wrote to her, directing the letter to Hertford Street "to be forwarded;" and in time I received her answer, dated from a small water-drinking place in Germany.

"You are," she wrote, "just the—shall I say man or boy?—well, man, if you like—just the man to be devotedly attached to your elder brother; for you have no envy

in your disposition. But don't be too unhappy. Of all our misfortunes, Death is the least; at any rate, it is the last, and has the great merit of preventing any more. Don't let them persuade you that because you have inherited you must change your life. Of course you will hear a great deal of your duty as a magistrate and a landlord; but remember the best landlord and magistrate is always the man who has seen most of the world. Look upon your life in London as a preparation for the other, and do not believe those who will tell you you must choose between the two.

"Success in life means keeping out of grooves; and a country groove is a very narrow one. We are coming to town for the winter, and I hope to see much more of you than in the Season, when it is so hard to see anything *really* of one's friends."

After the receipt of this letter, which went on to tell me little bits of news which would not amuse the reader of this history,

and which indeed I only appreciated because of the hand that penned them, I became restless, and soon broached the idea of returning to my duty. Armed as I was with a letter from Marx saying that, although my brother officers were content to do my duty as long as it was necessary for me to stay away, still it would be as well if I could make a limit to my absence, my mother could scarcely oppose me very strongly.

"You are your own master, Mervyn, or, at least, you very soon will be; and you have not cared for my wishes so much of late that I can expect you to give up anything for my sake."

"My dear mother, I would gladly give up everything in reason, did you ask me. But I do not see why I should abandon my career——"

"Guarding St. James's Palace," put in my mother, with a touch of her old scorn.

"Well, guarding St. James's Palace, if you like, although I think the Guards have done other work. I am too young to settle down here. I have made friends in London——"

Again she interrupted me with flashing eyes.

"Friends! Yes, Bayley North, a man who——"

Then she paused.

"Who what? Tell me a reason why I should reject his friendship; one reason!"

She rose coldly.

"I suppose it is Fate," she said, in a dreary sort of voice, which gave me pain to hear; "and against Destiny I can fight no better than another. But—oh, my God—I thought to have saved him—my boy—my darling boy—my Arthur!"

And she burst into a passion of tears.

"Oh, mother," I said, bending over her and holding her graceful form in my arms;

"mother, why will you not let me love you?—let me in some sort take his place and——"

"Take his place! You!"

Scorn, I think, hurts almost as much unmerited as merited. I said no more, and when I went back to London, my natural high spirits fighting with the sadness of late events, I felt as if that mysterious chasm between my mother and myself had been widened rather than bridged over by them.

But before I left Ballyconor a thing occurred which I must mention here.

My mother came to my room one evening with two letters addressed to herself, and with the seals unbroken, in her hand.

"Be good enough, Mervyn," she said, in her coldest and most dignified manner, "to give these two letters to your friend, and tell him that any more from the same quarter will be burned unread, as these are unread."

And as I put them into my pocket I saw that the handwriting on the envelope was that of Bayley North.

CHAPTER XII.

A DIGRESSION AND A LECTURE.

I HAD not been long in London before I discovered the difference between Mervyn O'Connor, the poor second son with doubtful prospects and a suspected tendency towards flirting with girls destined for his betters, and Sir Mervyn, owner of a castle and possible millionaire. It is true the Castle was only in Ireland, where castles grow somewhat in the shape of those in Spain, but still a castle in Ireland was in mothers' eyes better than none at all, and there was one advantage of even a poor heritage in the Green Isle—namely, that few Londoners

saw it, and that thus a pleasant halo of exaggeration could be safely thrown over its size and grandeur. Of course, my mourning at first prevented my accepting the invitations that came in quickly enough now, but towards the end of the winter I thought it permissible to emerge from my retirement and enjoy some of the festivities of the little season, which is far preferable to the big one in summer. I had invested in three horses, which I kept at Leighton Buzzard, and about twice a week I did my best to show the hard riders of that grassy country that a training over banks and stone walls did not disqualify me from negotiating timber or water with the best of them.

What splendid moments those were—the recollection of them now makes my heart beat, and my cheek glow—when some four couple of hounds—enough for all practical purpose for us jealous ones—have got well out of covert, not three hundred

yards behind that cunning old dog-fox, out for a lark, and some six miles from his home, to which he means to take us as hard as his legs can carry him, *up wind.* A tearing scent, big sowed grass fields, about a dozen determined men mounted on the best horses money can procure, in tip-top condition, racing from fence to fence; less ambitious spirits riding honestly the line, and never seeing a hound from find to finish; still more cautious horsemen making points, and with but little fencing seeing a good deal of the fun, and some of them, grizzled Nimrods of many winters' experience, knowing better what the hounds had done than we who were riding by the side of the pack.

How they race! Hold up, horse! Two of those go to a fall, and I can't afford to fall unless Bob Scamperton falls too. What a nice mare that is of his! I'll buy her at any price. Easy over that plough! Down! Never mind; I kept hold of the

reins, and am on again in an instant; rewarded two fields after by seeing my rival and brother subaltern Bob measure his length on the sward, while his mare trots off in the silly lost fashion of a riderless horse. What's that? A halloa, close by. Look there! Yes—it is the fox going up that big field on the hill! Forard! forard! we involuntarily yell out, quite ignoring the fact that if the hounds went any faster we should be left hopelessly behind. My good horse begins to jump short, and quite ignores the spurs, a touch of which in the morning would have driven the somewhat obstreperous animal mad.

Another man down! The select company with the hounds is becoming "small by degrees and beautifully less." Yet another cropper; and this time the horse—the first whip's—refuses to rise, and poor Tom is left ruefully sitting on the rail, the top bar of which he has broken, gazing at the fast-receding pack. Oh! that I may

last to the end! I pray, as I nurse my horse carefully over a spongy, badly-drained field, and, with a prudence I should have scorned ten minutes ago, turn out of my way towards a welcome gate.

"He's just afore you!" shouts the civil farmer who opens it. But just before us, too, is the covert where his home lies awaiting him, the earth too probably gaping wide. Forard! Forard! The hounds stop short, then turn and race almost mute down a hedge at right angles to the line. He is running short—nothing but a miracle can save him.

"Leave them alone, oh, huntsman! In the name of heaven, leave them alone!" No need to say this. The huntsman says never a word; his horn reposes in its case; he knows when and where not to interfere —that knowledge so difficult to attain. Up another hedgerow, another momentary check, then a burst in view half across a big grass-field, on the other side of which

you can see the gorse covert, then—"Worry! worry! Who-oop!"

"As good a gallop as I ever saw," says a noble lord, jumping off his horse. "Straight as an arrow and fast as an express train. Squandered the field a bit, too. Only seven of us altogether." And I was one of that seven! Yes, they were glorious moments, scarcely to be equalled by any mere intellectual after-enjoyments; those wild gallops across country!

My reader must pardon me if my revived enthusiasm has a little carried me away.

Now and then during that winter I heard of the Monymusks. Dear old Marx met them at Florence, when he was spending a month of his leave, and wrote several poems to her ladyship—one "On her dropping her catalogue in the Pitti Gallery," and another "On seeing Lady M—— in front of the Venus de' Medici," being especially ingenious.

"She asked after you," he said.

"When are they coming home?" I asked, trying to look indifferent.

"Oh! she didn't know. I fancy Lord Monymusk was ill—at least he didn't appear while I was there. By the way, North was there too. I met him two or three times with her. Seemed very attentive. But he's a great deal too old, of course."

Soon after this I received a letter from Bayley North, dated Rome, which I may as well transcribe here:—

"Here am I, my dear Mervyn, in this city of very old antiquities and very new society; the paradise of American shoddy kings and hangers-on to the fringe of London society; the elysium of young Irish ladies whose ideas of dissipation had, before coming here, been an annual ball in Patrick's Hall, or a dance at the county town barracks. The American beauties amuse me; they are so very proud, so very clever, so very beautiful, and so very un-

interesting, except as studies of incarnate vulgarity—as specimens of what imitative power combined with absolute effrontery and well-cut features will do. I declare, when going through a gallery with one of them, I always expected her to turn on me in that quick manner of theirs, and demand scornfully how many dollars one of Titian's beauties possessed in her lifetime, or whether that old gentleman in scanty clothing, depicted by Domenichino, was in the dry goods line.

"They are the women of the future, you know, and as such we must accept them, as I suppose we must accept Wagner's tuneless music, and a certain painter's unintelligible 'harmonies.' But when they have prevailed and spread over the earth, I trust there will be preserved to us by a kind Providence some savage land where deluded old Tories may find a woman or two of flesh and blood, of affections, sympathies, weaknesses, shyness, with complexions and

sound teeth, and with complete ignorance of everything except love, dancing, and perhaps novels. The American women are very splendid, so are the American sewing-machines; the American women are very beautiful, but their beauty is like that of a marble 'block' in New York city. Give me a tumble-down old English farmhouse, covered with ivy, full of architectural faults, instead.

"The next time I travel I shall previously purchase a title—Count or Baron would do. Success with the fair sex here is not to be had without. I was tremendously snubbed yesterday by Mrs. O'Slathery (of Castle Slathery, in Galway) in favour of Count Something, whom I remember distinctly as a waiter at an hotel in Folkestone; but I daresay the tips there enabled him to buy a Countdom, and he wears his order—Legion of Honour, I think—with infinite grace and distinction. A real Italian Marquis, with a pedigree as long as one of Canon L——'s sermons, was

snubbed by Mrs. O'S. at the same time as your humble servant, which was hard upon the poor man, as he had just offered to the wealthy Hibernian widow his palazzo, and all that it contained, at a very moderate price, considering the antiquity of his family.

"'The oidear!' she said to me afterwards. 'Imagine the Marquis offering to sell his own palace! Fancy an O'Slathery selling the sate of his ancestors!' I have since ascertained that the O'Slathery property is in the hands of creditors, the late chieftain having spent his patrimony on whisky and cards at the nearest public, and that the Castle is a square, twelve-roomed house, built about forty years ago, and splendidly whitewashed.

"I am writing to you merely to fill up the time between dinner, at the horrible hour of six, and a Roman party to which I am bidden, and where I shall stand among a crowd of Roman nobles with Roman noses, knock-knees, and sallow faces, and

glare uncomfortably across the room at a row of haughty Roman dames, seated in straight lines, and about as inviting as a range of extinct volcanoes. Never mind! After that comes a little party to see the Coliseum by moonlight—the Darbeytons, Scroobys, Lady Monymusk, and some others —which, with its supper afterwards, will make up for the patrician coldness of my Roman party.

"Gertrude Monymusk is looking uncommonly well; perhaps her having left his Lordship at Florence may account for her high spirits. She tells me that he has accepted a berth on board Addely's yacht, now at Naples, and means to cruise until the late spring. She herself intends to go back to London soon, and I shouldn't be surprised if I volunteered as escort, having outlived the age when scandal is possible. She tells me that you are quite the nicest of the new boys in London. *Gare à vous, mon ami!* But it is no use warning you, as

I remember. If you are passing my diggings, just tell the old woman to have things ready, fires going, &c., as I may turn up at any moment. Now don't go and catch cold, watching and waiting in Hertford Street!

"By-the-by, I have never written to you since you became Sir Mervyn. Whether you are to be congratulated or not I scarcely know. Credit with mothers and tradesmen is a grand thing, for a time. But eldest sons or proprietors have to pay some day! Whereas your poor devil who gets his credit in Society and in shops by stealth, as it were, can put off the evil day almost indefinitely. Write and tell me the news—post-office here, as I shall stay for certain another fortnight.

"Ever yours,

"BAYLEY NORTH."

I didn't exactly "watch and wait" in Hertford Street after the reception of this letter; but I certainly passed that way

oftener than was absolutely necessary, and was rewarded, early in the month of April, by seeing the blinds drawn up, the chimneys smoking, and other unmistakable signs of the speedy coming home of "the family."

A couple of days after appeared the (to me) magic announcement in the *Morning Post*:—

"Lady Monymusk has arrived at her residence in town. His Lordship remains abroad, where he is yachting with the Earl of Addely."

Not many hours had elapsed before I was knocking with a trembling hand at her door.

"It is so nice of you to come so soon to welcome me back," she said, with her pleasant smile, after a few of the common-places of greeting.

"I couldn't help coming directly I saw you had arrived," I stammered, furious with myself for blushing.

"And why should you help it? I am

sure one doesn't find so many friends in this world that one can afford to lose those one has made."

"You will allow me to be your friend, then?"

"Yes. You're too young. Never mind —you will grow out of that. You shall be my friend, and you shall come and tell me all your little grievances and cares, and confide in me all about your loves. Who is she now?"

"She?"

"Yes. You don't expect me to believe you are in love with nobody at your age?"

"You mean a girl?"

"What else could I mean, sir? I am afraid you have grown very wicked. What else could I mean?"

"I hate girls. They are all so stupid, and care about nothing but dancing and jabbering nonsense about how many balls they have been to or are going to, and how awfully jolly their week in Yorkshire was,

or how awfully dull their week in Norfolk was, or how awfully unkind mamma is, or how awfully——"

"Stop! stop! You mustn't be so cynical. Do you really mean to ask me to believe you are heart-whole, Sir Mervyn?"

"No; and I wish you wouldn't call me Sir Mervyn."

"Well, Mervyn. I scarcely like to encourage such things, but confession will do no harm, at any rate. Who is the unhappy husband whose domestic peace you are troubling?"

Her gaiety hurt me.

"No husband's," I said, rather gruffly. "The woman I love knows nothing of it, and—and I shall never dare to tell her."

"So much the better," she said, screening the fire from her face with a fan she took up; "it is a thing that should never be told."

"And yet it is so strong that——"

"The stronger it is the more reason for keeping it secret. Don't be carried away by all the silly cynical talk you hear, my dear boy. A woman's name—her honour—is her dearest possession. If a man loves a woman who cannot—may not—return his love, there is every reason why he should be silent. If he loves her truly, he cannot wish to pain her, surely?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, what can his speaking do but give her pain? If she return the feeling—and, despite herself, she may—what does his speaking mean? That she must either, for his sake, become in her own eyes a degraded woman, that she must for him sacrifice her self-respect, or that she must do violence to her feelings, act a lie to the man she secretly loves, and thrust him from her side, and for the rest of her life be tormented with the horrible feeling that she has been cruel to him whom she would give almost

anything—short of her honour—to shield from a pang. No, Mervyn; a man's love of this kind may be ever so strong, let him bear it like a man, and, for the sake of her he loves, let him remain silent."

"And if he cannot?"

"Then let him go. That is one of a man's privileges—he can go when he likes. We women are often tied down, bound hand and foot, to the stake of temptation."

"This is not the view taken by——"

"By most men and women of the world now. No. But, thank Heaven, the philosophy of men like Bayley North, the code of morals of women like Lady ——, is not so powerful as cheap cynics and immoral novelists suppose."

She alluded to a lady, beautiful exceedingly and a marvel of artistic dress, whose husband—long ago ruined by play—mysteriously supplied her with every possible luxury, including stepping horses, a yacht,

and a perfect house in Mayfair, on an income of a few hundreds a-year.

Lady Monymusk had risen when she spoke the last words, and stood opposite me, with a bright light in her eyes and a colour on her cheeks that made her look more supremely beautiful than anything I ever imagined. I rose, and, as I did so, she put one of her hands in mine.

"You must go now, Mervyn, for I have to dress for dinner. Come and see me whenever you please, and always remember that I am your true friend, who is privileged to give you advice. And you'll take it?"

"I will try to," I said, and I stooped down and kissed the white hand that lay in mine.

"Thank you," she said, simply, and with something like tears in her eyes. "Whatever the pain now, it is nothing to what giving way to your impulse would—must—bring. Good-bye."

Her lips just touched my forehead, and I went from her sweet presence in a dream of love that was as pure as that of an innocent girl.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CURSE BEGINS TO WORK.

YES. As pure as that of an innocent girl. For the moment all the grosser part of my affection for Gertrude Monymusk was beaten down; only that feeling remained which may be instinct, or may be the product of the sweetness and light following in the steps of civilization, but which, after all, is a noble feeling, and one of the certain things that divide us human beings from the lower creation.

I love; therefore I am. I love purely, uncarnally, unselfishly, therefore I am a man. Not the imperfect thing in which the

intended finish has been self—or Society—neglected, and which unites in itself the brutal instincts of the brute with the vicious cunning of the human creature; but a man with a mind, a soul, a heart—an incarnation of generous impulses guided by cultivated idea.

And the belief in Gertrude which was then in me produced a belief in other goodness, a softness and reasonable credulity that was salutary to my moral nature. She was—to me—so pure that I let her personate the whole world of women, and a coarse remark or brutal story which at other times would have made me laugh just then made me shiver.

Cynicism is a fine thing in its way doubtless, but it shrivels up to nothing at the first approach of feeling.

And there were things concerning my goddess herself which I had to hear, and which it required all my self-control to hear without an outbreak. Society persisted this

season in connecting her name with that of Bayley North. Of course, I well knew that there was, that there could be, no reason for the wagging of these slanderous tongues; but I could not conceal even from myself that he *was* continually at her side in public, and that I scarcely ever now dropped in at Hertford Street without finding him seated in the most comfortable chair in that pretty room of hers, with a lazy air of at-homeness which irritated me almost as much as it seemed to confirm the prevalent rumours.

Lord Monymusk's cruise had been prolonged far into the summer, a fact that would otherwise have afforded me intense satisfaction. Now I scarcely saw more of her than I had the season before. I sometimes tried to sit North out, and, although I always failed, I came away secretly comforted. Assuredly there was scarcely friendship, not to speak of any warmer feeling, between the two. In response to his

amusing cynicism and good stories of their neighbours, he received but the coldest of monosyllables, except now and then, when her face flushed and she protested hotly against some hard, cruel saying of his.

This appeared to amuse him, and he goaded her sometimes to the pitch of fury, sitting there watching her exquisite face with a smile in his I almost hated him for.

Could she be in his power? And how? Were there dark secrets in her past? What was the secret of this man's success with women? Even over my mother, who evidently detested him, he had a strange influence, to which she had been obliged to succumb. What could it be?

Notwithstanding all this, I myself failed to shake off the fascination he possessed for me, which, when he chose it should, reasserted itself with all its earlier force.

The reason of this was partly that the man was, I believe, real only with me. With me he often put aside his cynical

worldliness, as on the occasion of our going to church together, and showed me that beneath it all there was a heart.

But with Gertrude Monymusk he was always the same—cold, and witty, and cruel in his estimate of human nature, in his laughter at the folly and wickedness around him.

What the relation between them was puzzled me. It would have puzzled a wiser head. But "the world," which has not time to draw delicate distinctions, settled at once what it was; and, ere the yacht sailed up the Solent with her lord and master on board, Lady Monymusk had gone a long way towards being classed amongst those members of "Society" who are only so because, as yet, the person whose sole right it is so to do has not protested against their shocking goings-on.

The night before the day on which Lord Monymusk returned to town, after having telegraphed to his wife to announce his safe

arrival at Southampton, I happened to be making a short cut down the Albany, thereby transgressing the rule of that retired and dignified Elysium of wealthy bachelors. It was dark, and as I sauntered along I was thinking rather bitterly of the gay young man's party at Limmer's which I had just left, and wondering why the spirits that a year ago would have made me the gayest among them had so strangely deserted me; why some shadow of impending evil seemed to hang continually over my life, and to cloud what should have been its brightest and most careless moments. As I passed the entrance to North's rooms, I glanced up and saw a light in the little passage window, and hesitated for a moment whether I would go in and have a cigar and a chat with him or proceed to my Club and take a hand at whist, or to Park Lane and get rid of my tobacco-smelling coat ere going into "Society." At that moment the door opened, and a female form emerged, hastily

brushing past me and going swiftly down the Arcade towards the Piccadilly entrance. My heart stood still. I could have sworn to that lithe figure under almost any disguise. I could not mistake that graceful walk or the inimitable carriage of the little head. It was Gertrude Monymusk! I looked round to make sure. Yes, it was the door that led to North's chamber; and, as I looked, there came to that door a man —Bayley North himself.

He started as he saw me, for I suppose I was under a lamp, and that my face was easily recognisable; and then, in his usual lazy manner, said—

"Hallo, Mervyn! Coming to have a smoke, eh? Come in! I was so tired of my own society that I was actually going down to hear those idiots at the Eccentric Club talk; but now you're here we'll be comfortable *chez moi.*"

I was far too much agitated to dissimulate. I could only say, in a hoarse voice,

"You were not alone? She——!" and here I stopped, unable to articulate.

"She!" he echoed, with apparent surprise. "Oh! that lady who preceded me downstairs just now. A pretty figure, I noticed. Old Ladybank, up on the second floor, has good taste. But it *is* shocking at his age. Come in!"

"No, thanks. I—it—I have to go out to-night." And I escaped his outstretched arms and fled down the passage.

Black's Club came in my way, and I entered, proposing, I believe—but I scarcely know what I proposed—to drink something to steady my nerves. The first person I met was old Lord Ladybank, an ancient lady-killer and as great a bore as was to be found in all London.

He stopped to tell me of some new young lady who was to take the town by storm in the Opera ballet that season, and to explain how he had already made the acquaintance of an aunt, and how thus he hoped soon to

gain that of her mother, and so by stages to arrive at the divinity herself (who was about seventeen, while Ladybank was not an hour under sixty-four), and at last I got a moment to ask him, as carelessly as possible,

"You live above North, in the Albany, I believe? Who else lives there, by the by?"

"No one now. Are you looking for rooms? The other two sets have been vacant this six months. Just the place for you, my boy. Come and breakfast with me and see them."

I declined as politely as might be, and escaped him. This, then, was the end of my faith and love; this was the reason of that advice she gave me, simply to keep me away and prevent my coming between her and this man. And to him—it made me shiver with rage to think of it—I had, time after time, recounted the history of my love and its purity, and her goodness and innocence, and the rest of it. All a lie! She

was not pure; she was not innocent! Then who was? If those eyes could lie, where on the earth could true eyes be found? If her faith were false, was there honesty above ground? But I would not condemn her yet. There might be some reason—some excuse; and North might have thought it necessary to lie in case of misconception, or have done so to minister to his own vanity and make me suspect.

I called in Hertford Street half-an-hour before lunch-time next day. There were some people there, but at last I managed to get a word with her unheard by them.

"Do you ever go to the Albany?"

"The Albany?"

She did not act it well; her colour went, and I saw her start violently.

"Yes," I said, in a hoarse whisper, with despair in my eyes; "at night—to visit Bayley North?"

"Sir Mervyn!"

She rose haughtily, and moved across the

room to where the others were seated, discussing the chances of a grand fancy-ball given by my regiment that night.

But she did not act it well, I say. I saw her clutch at the back of a chair as she told Lady Scarribel what her dress was to be; and I caught a look—a look that I could not guess at the meaning of—horror, remorse, shame, reproach, affection almost—that she cast at me as she turned to follow the others to luncheon downstairs.

I was close behind her.

"Good-bye," I said in her ear.

"Will you not come in to luncheon?"

"Oh, no," said little Mrs. Dashley; "he's on the ball committee, and must go back to his duties. If the floor isn't good, Sir Mervyn, I'll never dance with you again."

"Oh! and do tell me," cried the irrepressible Lady Scarribel, "what is the Duchess of Saint Lazar going to wear?"

"And is it true that your Colonel is going to whiten his nose to disguise himself?"

"And what time is the Prince coming?"

Amid a fire of such questions I escaped.

There was only one thing to do now. And I did it. Anything was better than the least doubt. With a good deal of trouble I discovered Bayley North, reading a French novel in the library of a Club to which we both belonged.

Disregarding the large board hung up opposite me, with "Silence" thereon inscribed, I plunged at once into my subject.

"I know that Lady Monymusk was at your chambers last night. Can you deny it?"

He carefully turned down a page of his book, and put it down on the sofa.

"Are you acting for Lord Monymusk?"

"No."

"Then since when has Society appointed you guardian of its morals—or social inquisitor?"

"Colonel North," I replied, scarcely knowing what to say, but determined to

learn the truth before either of us left that room, "you have pretended—or felt—some liking for me. You have been kind to me, and I am grateful. Do one thing for me now. Tell me the truth. I am tortured beyond bearing by even the shadow of a doubt. Tell me the truth. She was there?"

"Do you wish me to confide in you, and do you promise to respect my confidence?"

"I do."

"Then, my dear unsophisticated Mervyn, of course she was. It was unlucky, your running up against her in that way. If you only had showed proper feeling you would have avoided looking at a lady in her position. But don't take it to heart so. What did you take her for?"

"You know what I took her for. I have told you a thousand times. I took her for a pure woman. God help me!"

"God help you indeed, my poor Mervyn, if you are to break your heart over every

married woman here who prefers some one else to yourself."

I shook his hand off my shoulder, and started up, causing two old gentlemen slumbering in their chairs at the other end of the room to look up and glance reproachfully at the board on the wall.

"It is not that. It is that she—whom I believed to be an angel—could——" And I leant my head upon the mantelpiece in speechless agony.

"Get to your tub, Diogenes, and give up the useless search with the lantern. Stick to fox-hunting, and don't engage in a sport which is only a succession of blank days—that after an honest woman."

"And you," I said, after a pause, looking at his sarcastic, calm face; "and you—do you not call yourself his friend?"

"Certainly. And I could show it in no better way than keeping his wife in a good humour, and leaving him time for his scientific pursuits at home. To a man of science,

as poor Mony appears to be, nothing is so fatal as having to be attentive to a wife. I shall probably have done much towards the eventual discovery of perpetual motion, or assisted in the squaring of the circle. Don't be a fool, Mervyn. You happen to have discovered a thing that has saved you from a good deal of pain, perhaps. Be warned in time. Never believe in a woman, and—pardon me if I presume on my greater experience—remember that men of the world do not, as a rule, ask or answer such questions as that you just put to me, nor interfere with each other's *petits jeux innocents.* You don't mean to put yourself in the husband's place and quarrel with me, surely?"

His mocking disconcerted me, and I remained silent.

"Instead of that, put yourself in my place. Supposing that, instead of that pretty little lecture she favoured you with that day you tried to make love to her, as

you own you did—I say, supposing that she had responded, and once offered to come to that charming little house in Park Lane, would you have said, 'No, Madam. I am too fond of Lord Monymusk to permit of it?' Bah! You know you would not. There is a vast amount of truth in that fable about the dog in the manger. 'If she is pure as far as I am concerned, she *shall* be pure as far as all other men are concerned.' Eh? Isn't that what you said to yourself—what your belief in her meant? You cannot be so vain as to suppose that a woman must be unapproachable because *you* cannot touch her heart? Be a sensible man, Mervyn, and remember that, although youth is a grand thing, experience sometimes beats it."

I turned fiercely on him, and the necessity of speaking low, in deference to the Club rule, rather added, I think, to the bitterness of my tone.

"Experience! And you boast of such

teaching as this! You are proud of knowing, after your forty years of life, how to do harm most successfully; you congratulate yourself on being able to tell lies to a woman—to be as false as hell to a friend! Look here, Colonel North, broken-hearted as I stand before you, while you sit and sneer at the woman whose name you have dishonoured in the eyes of the one man, perhaps, who revered her as she *must* wish to be revered—who believed in the beauty of her womanhood—I would not change places with you! I would not, even for what you have gained, for your so-called *success*, be like you—a blackguard!"

He started up with a muttered oath, then quickly re-seated himself, and laughed.

"It is the privilege of youth to be angry, but it is silly and womanish to call ugly names. I am not going to fight a duel about a——"

"Stop!" I cried, this time forgetting all about the rules, and receiving a glance from

an old gentleman that spoke volumes of complaint to be addressed to the Committee. "If you say a word of that sort in connection with her, I'll kill you!"

I was young and strong, and could very easily have carried out my threat. Thirty years of hard living had not improved North's strength, although they had not impaired the grace of his slim figure.

He laughed again, but a little uneasily.

"Really we mustn't come to blows here, or we shall be turned out of the Club. I think perhaps we had better not meet till you have got into a more sensible frame of mind. When you are in love with some new 'pure woman,' you can come and apologise to me, and thank me, too, for having given you your freedom, so that you could enjoy a new adventure."

His last words I scarcely heard as I left the room, sick at heart, and remembering my uncle James's mysterious legends and prophecy that from the love of women

should come every misfortune to our race.

Not much consolation did I receive from old Gilbeau, to whom that night I confided my sorrows, under strict seal of secrecy. He scarcely could conceal his joy at the ending of what he persisted in calling "my *liaison*." Thus in despair of sympathy I at last sallied forth, and walked all night through the gloomy London streets, envying all I met, even the poor draggled painted outcast to whom I gave a shilling, that she might forget a little of her woe, and purchase some forgetfulness of shame and horror, in the friendly glass of gin.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DERBY.

I WILL pass over the misery of the next few days. My resolution to see Gertrude Monymusk no more was firmly taken; but the longing for a final interview, the struggle to keep myself from Hertford Street, and to abstain from going to parties where she was likely to be, was very severe.

The shock I had received in discovering her falsehood—not to me, but to her husband—in finding that my idol was only clay after all, changed my nature. I became moody and peevish. I drank more than

was good for me; not, indeed, intoxicating myself, but obtaining a kind of fictitious eagerness which led me sometimes into quarrels, and sometimes into dissipations which I blush to think of now. I tried to be cynical, and probably succeeded only in being silly; but I believed that my immature incredulity was very bitter, and I almost, at times, sneered myself into the belief that I was "*plus fin que tous les autres.*" Admitted, easily enough, behind the scenes at many theatres, I soon discovered how rapidly money can be got rid of by other means than horse-racing and gambling, and, after a baddish night or two at whist, and other less skilful games, I was obliged to make inquiries of my impecunious friends as to the address of some friendly and convenient Jew.

The name of the one to whom I was directed does not matter much. He lived in a street not far from Piccadilly, and to his modest residence did I repair one April

day, a little nervous at this my first experience of borrowing money.

I found him smug, red-wigged, and respectable-looking, with a huge watch-chain, and an affable, philanthropic manner that would have worked wonders at a charity meeting. And his words were as kind as his appearance—words uttered in that thick, unctuous tone peculiar to his race. I will not attempt to re-produce his pronunciation in the spelling.

"God bless my soul! This is bad. You, Sir Mervyn O'Connor; so young a man—only just—let me see"—and here he referred to a Baronetage which lay on the table beside him—"only just come into your title and estate. Come to me, the Jew money-lender, for money! Oh! it is sad—very sad! I am afraid you gamble."

"A little."

"And bet on horses?"

"Yes, sometimes."

He groaned.

"Oh, it is sad! I have seen so many fine young men ruined. And your income is——"

I mentioned the modest sum. He gave a start.

"God bless me! and you cannot live upon that without coming to me! Don't you know that to come to people like me is ruin?"

"Well, I have heard so," I replied, rather impatient at all these preliminaries; "but I suppose that is the affair of those who choose to come. Can you lend me the money at once?"

"Couldn't you do without? Just think.. Couldn't you wait while the family solicitor gets it for you in a legitimate way?"

"No, I can't," I rejoined, somewhat crossly, "or else I shouldn't have come to you."

"Ah! my poor boy," and here he put his fat, be-ringed hand upon my shoulder, "you don't know how easy it is to go down

hill, and the first step down is when you come to us. How much is your mother's jointure?"

I informed him.

"And you must have this money?"

"Yes, I must."

"Well, I can't bear to see a fine young man like you go to the dogs—and once you go there they eat you up—without trying to stop you. What do you say to promising to give up cards and betting? I'll leave you the other amusement, which is about as expensive, so help me!"

I stared at him. This was a man I had always heard of as rapacious and utterly insensible to feeling!

"No, I can't make any promises."

"Not if I found—mind you, we've no money, we get it from clients—not if I found you what you want at a cheap rate?"

"Not even then."

"Well, well," and he sighed deeply,

"I'll see what I can do. You know my brother?"

"No."

"All the better for you. If he had been here to-day you wouldn't have got off under sixty per cent., so help me! He's a very good man, is my brother, but he is a little sharp about business matters. It is very lucky for you you found me instead. Well, I like the look of you, and should like to save you from ruin, and from *us;* so come back the day after to-morrow at twelve, and I may be able to let you have the money, (though, so help me, it's an *enormous* sum), at about ten per cent., and then I shall lose about three per cent. by the transaction."

"Oh, I don't want you to lose, Mr. ——," I said, taking up my hat, and wondering at the kindness of my Israelite.

"Go away, Sir Mervyn—go away—and let me think it over. If you don't come back, I shall be glad. Remember what

I said—and go to your family solicitor."

But, for several good reasons, I did not go to my family solicitor, and at the time named I found myself again in the spider's web.

His face was overcast, and he shook my hand despondently.

"I am sorry you have come back, Sir Mervyn—very sorry. So you still want the money?"

"Certainly. I hope you have it for me."

"Yes; but——" here he took a pinch of snuff and looked as if ready to weep; "but my brother, a very good man, but *rather* sharp about business, Sir Mervyn, won't do it under the usual terms; and I can't conscientiously let you borrow at such a rate—so help me, I can't."

"What rate is that?"

"Sixty per cent.,—not a penny less. My brother says he won't part with such an enormous sum for a penny less. Don't do

it, Sir Mervyn, don't do it. It's a robbery —I told my brother it was a robbery—but he's a hard man on business, is my brother, and he said, 'If the young man don't like it, he can leave it.' You'd much better leave it, Sir Mervyn. Here it is; let me send it back to him."

And as he spoke he displayed from a drawer a bundle of crisp new Bank of England notes, and counted them slowly and thoughtfully.

Already I had kept an écarté rival waiting for two days, and the sight of the notes did away with any hesitation the Jew's good advice might have created.

"All right," I said; "hand 'em over."

"I have deducted the interest from them. It's my brother's way. He will have it so. So there's £60 under the sum named on each hundred; and here's the bill."

"At six months! Why then you should only have deducted half—only £30. Your rate is £120 per cent."

"Just what I told my brother," said the Jew, with a despairing wave of his hand; "just what I told him, so help me. I said, 'It's shameful! You're charging the young man 120 per cent.' But my brother only said again, 'If the young man don't like it, he——'"

"Yes, yes," I interrupted, "I suppose you really won't let me have it for less?"

"Now I like that," said he, putting the notes and the bill away hurriedly into the drawer, and locking it—"I like that. I said to my brother, 'He's an intelligent gentleman is Sir Mervyn, and he won't submit to be robbed in this way.' That's right. Don't have anything to do with it. Go to your family solicitor, and then live on your income. That's right. I'm glad you've shown a proper prudence at last." And he stood up, and held out his hand to take leave of me.

"Oh! I didn't mean that," I said, remaining seated. "The fact is, I *must* have the

money at once; and if I can't have it cheaper—well—hand it over."

He sighed, unlocked the drawer, and laid the bill before me. I did not quite know what to do with it, but was ashamed to ask—it implying such extreme youth never to have accepted a bill—and while I was dallying over it I looked up, and saw that, although he had risen and stood with his back to me, he was observing me in the looking-glass with great interest.

"Write accepted, and then your name—here—across it. So you've never done one before? I'm very glad to hear that," he said, and he did really seem glad. "And I hope this will be the last. What did you say your mother's age was?"

I told him, took up the notes, and was about to go when he stopped me, in a deprecatory, shamefaced way.

"I am very sorry, Sir Mervyn; but you see I am junior partner, and my brother is a hard man about business; but I am obliged

to give him a message for you. If any of your brother officers are in want of money, you can mention that we shall be happy to let them have it on their simple note of hand."

"At 120 per cent.?"

"Oh! Sir Mervyn," and his eyes really filled with tears, "there you hurt my feelings. If you knew the hours I spent entreating my brother to let me do it for you at ten! But my brother, Sir Mervyn, although a good man, is——"

I did not wait for the end of the sentence, but departed, happy for the moment in that I could pay off a member of my Club, who had already begun to hint that our *écarté* should be conducted on strict ready-money principles.

It is sad to think that this stickler for punctuality of payment afterwards seceded from Tattersall's under very painful circumstances, and afterwards had a little difference within the Ring in Paris, which compelled

his turning his attentions to horseracing in the distant land of Australia. But this by the way. When I lost money to him, he wore his white hat, and opened his enormous betting-book in the Ring with the best of them.

The philanthropical Jew was not wrong in part of his gloomy prophecies. I was soon back again in his office, and I became very shortly a proficient in the art of writing my name across an oblong piece of stamped paper. Everything went wrong with me. To begin with I got "in" with a certain stable, which had a "dark" prodigy of a three-year-old for the Derby.

It was to be a *coup* such as never had before been made, and we were all to realize large fortunes, and retire in the plenitude of wealth and wisdom from the varying life of the Turf.

Things went well for a time. We dribbled our money on the horse—Phœbus by name—so artistically that he scarcely

rose in the quotations. We told no one, except a chosen cohort of "friends of the stable;" and Phœbus did his work in such a style that the best judges amongst our number said that the race was over.

I had a share in the animal, and stood to win a tremendous stake on him by the time that the longed-for Derby week arrived.

With what secret contempt did I hear night after night the speculations of those miserable ones not in our secret, as to the winner; with what a glow of prospective triumph did I not see one cold morning our champion win his trial in the commonest of canters; with what enthusiasm—almost forgetting Lady Monymusk and my woe—did not I take my place on a coach full of brother officers on the great day *en route* for Epsom Downs; with what disdain did I not languidly view the races before the great event; with what a proud feeling of proprietorship did I not jostle my way

through the crowds hunting the favourites in the paddock, and at length, finding Phœbus, listen, with the feeling of an artist hearing his own picture praised at an exhibition, to the remarks of the circle of knowing ones his good looks and superb condition attracted.

Five, seven, ten points in the betting he went up; the latter rising being when—with such sweeping action as can only be seen in a horse bred from winners and shaped as he was—he came past the Stand in his preliminary canter. Johnny Gunn, who was riding him, was calm and confident. Now—before less than ten to one was the price—was the time for my final plunge. I approached the ring.

"Here, Captain—here, Sir Mervyn—what'll you do? I'll lay agin any of them outsiders!"

"Phœbus," I remarked, quietly, standing close by the rails, on the other side of which an enormous man was shouting him-

self hoarse, only stopping every now and then to give instructions to his attendant clerk, whose duty was to write down the bets.

"Phœbus—nine to one—nine hundred to one, I'll lay! Write it down, Sir Mervyn."

"No; ten," I said, pretending to turn away, and shutting my betting-book with a snap.

"Ten; very well. I wouldn't do it for anyone else. Ten—shall we say monkeys?"

"Thous, if you like."

"Ten thou to one—Phœbus." And the bet was booked.

Trying in vain to appear calm and indifferent, I mounted to the box where I had taken care to have a place, so as to secure an uninterrupted view of the race.

"Hats off!" The bell rings—a knell to so many a fortune—a bell that has always

seemed to me to have something desperately melancholy in its sound—and all eyes are strained towards the starting-place. At first they run all in a heap, and no one has cause to be enthusiastic; but soon the pace begins to tell, and they spread out. What is that lying third, but well up, and evidently pulling double? Phœbus! Johnny Gunn sits like a statue, and I fancy, even at this distance, I can distinguish on his features the smile of certain triumph. He has never won a Derby, popular jockey though he be —and at last the spell is to be broken.

Yes, they come on like the wind, the favourite leading; then the chestnut, and then our horse. They reach Tattenham Corner! The leading horse swerves; his jockey raises his whip. "The favourite's beat! The favourite's beat!" is roared from a couple of hundred throats. The mass of people sway about with enthusiasm; conflicting cries fill the air. I see, confusedly, three horses apparently locked together. I

hear the sound of three whips plying. I am deafened by shouts of "The favourite! Vortex! Phœbus! Phœbus wins!" "By G—d, he does!" says a voice in my ear—that of little Dalesman, our plunging subaltern—"and we're all made men!" The cries redouble, the favourite drops behind; only two horses struggle on, and there is not a pin to chose between them. "Phœbus! Vortex! Vortex! Phœbus!" "Vortex wins, for a monkey!" shouts a book-maker, under my box. "Done!" I yell out; and as the words leave my lips the two horses, amid the roar of the multitude, shoot together past the post.

"No. 13," says a lady in my box. "See, they've put the number up. No. 13—Vortex. I forget, Sir Mervyn, whether you are interested in him or in Phœbus. I think Vortex is the prettiest; he is such a nice colour, and has such a pretty head."

CHAPTER XV.

THE FRUITLESS PLUNGE.

PROBABLY everyone has experienced the disagreeable sensation of waking up the morning after a reverse of fortune. It may be that your mistress has proved unkind, that your washerwoman has broken her plighted troth with regard to your shirts, that a bill is due, that your best horse shows symptoms of chronic cough, that your splendid article has been returned "with thanks," that your new clothes, tried on overnight and with which you intended to astonish the Park that morning, do not fit—you scarcely know on waking what it is

that infuses so much melancholy into the usually pleasant time of lazy thought previous to plunging into that tub ostentatiously and noisily prepared for you by your servant. You only know that you are bowed down by some woe, and, as the mists of sleep are dispelled, and your eyes gradually open to their full extent, you gradually become aware of the exact nature of the misfortune that has befallen you. I wish Mr. St. George Mivart, or some one of the same philosophical tendency, would explain how it is that after a long period of absolute forgetfulness, and even while total ignorance of the evil lingers, the effects of such unknown evil are as powerful—nay, in some cases still more powerful—than if they were not forgotten. For after throwing off this kind of instinctive despair, and wide awake to grapple with the facts as they are, you find that there is nothing so very terrible in them after all, and that the feeling which so oppressed you on waking was totally unsuit-

ed to the gravity of the misfortune which was its cause.

I remember a friend once telling me that he woke one morning in abject terror, with a gallows before the eye of his mind, convinced, in that half-sleepy way, that he had committed murder overnight; and it was not till he had drunk his cup of tea that he became aware that his crime had really consisted in giving a black eye to an insolent cabman.

To my melancholy that morning after the Derby, however, came no such pleasant re-action. Add it up in my betting-book how I chose, there was the same terrible sum, which I had to obtain by Monday, staring me in the face. That it must be obtained was evident—but how?

I had already borrowed a sum that appalled me, and, besides, I doubted whether my philanthropic friend, with the sixty per cent. brother, would do more for me just yet. However, to him I re-

paired, and my fears were nearly realised.

"It's too much, Sir Mervyn. You are going the pace too fast," he said. "My brother won't do it without another name —a good name."

This seemed impossible to me—to make a friend liable for a sum which I scarcely knew how to pay when due; and that evening, when we happened to be left alone in the Club smoking-room, I told young Dalesman of my difficulty.

"Another name!" he cried. "Of course; why not? It's as easy as possible."

"It doesn't seem so to me."

"Mine'll do. I'm pretty solvent just now; for I hedged a bit you know, old chap."

"But I tell you in three months I don't expect to be more able to pay such a sum than now."

"What does that matter? He'll renew, and if he won't——"

"Well, if he won't?"

"Why, we'll go to another Shylock—that's all."

"But in the end?"

"The end! Good Heavens, you don't mean to say you are beginning to think of the end now?"

The upshot was that Jack Dalesman did add his autograph to a new bill, and that I vowed to get it all back, and plenty more, on a very safe and sure investment for the Goodwood Stakes. True, no great odds were to be obtained, but the horse was no dark one untried in public, like our Derby candidate; and even wise old gentlemen, who were cautious in prophecy, and still more so in investment, staked their opinion and their money on him with re-assuring confidence.

Like all young men who are betting high, money, as far as that commodity is concerned with the ordinary needs of life, was of no moment to me now; and I surprised my brother officers and horrified dear old Gilbeau

by the magnificence of my stud and the still greater magnificence of my mode of life. A share in an omnibus-box at both Opera-Houses did not content me (I write of the time when everyone "who was anyone" went to the Opera, and when it was a sure draw for all your friends on a Saturday night). I must needs take a box also for the season at a theatre where—— But my reason matters little now. I gave dinners, both to the world before and to that behind the footlights, at Richmond and Greenwich. I tried vainly to shoot pigeons with certainty at Hornsey Wood, backing myself with bold though misplaced confidence; I belonged to every racing club that was formed, and I laid out money in two-year-olds and yearlings, and sent them to a well-known trainer, regardless of the portentous bill therefrom which would but too surely come; I was put up for half the clubs in London, and at any of them where play could be had I vied with the heaviest players

in the stakes I was ready to hazard; I ran over to Paris continually from Saturday to Monday; I took special trains to race-meetings when the ordinary ones did not quite suit my fastidious tastes; I left my floor in old Gilbeau's Park Lane house, and took a sweet little house of my own close to the bottom of St. James's Street, where my dinner-parties of six and suppers of ten became much talked of; I ordered coats by the dozen and trousers by the score; I thought nothing of idling away an afternoon in Bond Street and ordering goods to the amount of half my income in that time; I joined two singularly impecunious youths in renting a deer forest in Scotland for the coming season; and I ordered of Mr. Cats-eye a hundred-ton schooner, which was to carry my racing flag triumphantly past many a flag-boat. In short, I exhausted as far as I could every means which is put in the power of a so-called "gilded youth" to get rid of his gilding; and all because I had

been shown the true side of a woman's character!

Gilding, put on by 60 per cent. gilders, too soon wears off, and lets the gingerbread show through; and it is scarcely to be wondered at that when the time came—after an Ascot which did me no good, if no harm—to journey down to Sussex and tempt fortune once more in the Duke of Richmond's park, my gingerbread was very nearly apparent to a close observer.

However, this time things actually did look promising. The horse was as "fit as a fiddle," the stable was confident to a man, and the betting never wavered; two to one, and not a shade more could you get. Although I formed one of a joyous party of young scamps who had a house near Bognor, I was unable to get down until the very day of the race, as an inconvenient guard-day intervened. At dinner that night at St. James's I was silent and *distrait*, except when the conversation turned on

racing, and, do what I would to emulate those calm gentlemen who lost ten years' income without moving an eyebrow, I could scarcely hide the agitation with which I heard Charlie Maynard—a young man "in the City" who always knew everything—say that he had been told my horse Zophar was reported to have pulled up lame after his gallop on the previous day. I had heard nothing of this, but being on guard I was tied by the leg, and could only, after meekly following my drummer and his erratic and strangely-confusing lantern on my rounds that night, retire to bed and dream of success on the morrow.

That morrow came. I rushed home to dress, caught the last special to Goodwood by half a minute, and unfolded the daily paper which I had bought. Of course I turned first to the sporting intelligence, and just as Lady Glowerly—who had long marked me for one of her stern-looking daughters—was making some severe remark

anent the bad management of the line, I read as follows:—

"We have just received intelligence that Zophar was struck out of the Goodwood Stakes at nine last night. He pulled up lame after his gallop on Monday, and, his lameness increasing, Sir John Holyland decided on this step. In consequence of his removal," &c.

But I could read no more; the words swam before my eyes, and it was not until the eldest Miss Glowerly had asked me three times whether I had ever heard Mr. Pilkington preach that I once more woke to the consciousness of an outside world.

To get back to London was now my first thought. I had not a shilling left; indeed, I doubted whether I could raise what I had now lost; and, in justice to myself, I must say that I never dreamed of attempting by any plunging to get that back. It seemed to me that to bet with no chance of not paying when you lose was not honest. But

I was very young then. At the next station, with some inane excuse to the Glowerly family, I sprang out, and soon managed, by dint of a bribe to the station-master, to stop a returning train of empty carriages and thus to return to town.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CHANGE IN LIFE.

"YOUR determination is a wise one, my boy," said old Gilbeau, as we sat together a few weeks after; "and I know you won't mistake my meaning when I say I am glad you did not accept my offer. Heaven knows I don't grudge you the money. I have more than I require for myself; but it *would*, as you say, be better for you to face the thing and be independent. Of course I'll take five per cent., if you insist, for that money wanted to pay off the scoundrelly Jew—the idea of 120 per cent. !—and in a few years of living quietly

in your new regiment abroad you'll be able to pay off most of this mortgage. By the way, what is the regiment?"

"The 110th."

"Quartered in Canada?"

"Yes, at Quereal."

"And what does your mother say?"

"She writes very kindly, but I cannot help thinking she is scarcely sorry that I should be obliged to leave London and——"

"And your friend Bayley North. How is it he hasn't been to see you lately?"

"He came yesterday, but I didn't see him."

"I suppose you have found out that he is only a fair-weather friend, eh?"

"No—he has offered me any money I required. No; but—but we are not friends still."

"Not friends, and yet he offers you money! Wonders will never cease."

When confiding my woe concerning Lady

Monymusk to old Gil, I did not tell him the name of my favoured rival. Gil had always so set himself against that intimacy that to have done so would have been to give him too great a triumph.

My affairs, although bad enough, had not turned out, on thorough investigation, quite so desperate as I supposed when I read the news of Zophar's scratching. My old friend in Park Lane lent me enough to pay off the philanthropical Israelite, and I contrived to raise a sufficient sum on mortgage of my estate to pay off the remainder of my debts of all kinds. So when, one evening in September, I sat down to a farewell dinner given in my honour by some of my ex-brother officers of the Fourth Guards, I was in that light-hearted state popularly supposed to be the attribute of a man who "doesn't owe a shilling, by Jove, sir!"

Notwithstanding this, however, my heart was very full, and the tears very near my eyes, when dear old Marx rose, and, with a

certain rough pathos hardly hidden under an elephantine attempt at humour, proposed my health and asked them to drink to my good luck in my new career; and when, after three ringing cheers had been given, they all came round to shake my hand and slap me encouragingly upon the back, I fairly broke down, and had to turn away to hide from them the traces of an emotion I need not have been ashamed of.

"God bless you, Jock," said old Marx, his voice sounding rather husky. "You're a good chap, only you never would come in time for parade; and a good officer, though I don't believe you ever quite understood how to tell off your company; and we're all very fond of you, old chap, though you did laugh at my poetry and write parodies of it. Parody is a very mean gift, Jock; don't go parodying the fellows in the 110th. They mightn't stand it. But after all there are parodies of Shakespeare, and Byron, and—and Miss Ingelow."

"It's an awful slow regiment, the 110th," said one of our dashing subalterns, who spent about £2,000 a year gaily on an allowance of £300. "I hear there is only one horse among them, and they take it in turns to ride it, and generally tumble off."

"Yes," echoed another of the same kidney, "and they go in for soldiering, and science, and maps, and knowing how much soap is used a day in the army, and how many buttons are used up annually, and all that sort of thing."

"There was a rich chap—cotton—or something—joined 'em once," went on the first speaker, "and brought a private servant; but after a few weeks the C. O. sent for him, and said the officers would be ruined unless this servant were sent away, as they were all dressing after him. And the cotton chap left because he wouldn't part with his valet."

"And they put a newly-joined Ensign in Coventry because he swaggered so infernally

—actually was caught putting pomatum on his hair and parting it at the back on a *week-day!*"

"Oh, yes! He was the same chap who had a cousin who was a Baronet, and mentioned him at mess by accident one day, and he had to exchange, for the others said they wouldn't speak to such a tuft-hunting snob."

"Do you remember our lying next them at Aldershot some years ago, and when we dined with them how the Major, after recommending the Moselle in preference to the champagne, asked Tom Plant how much leave we got in London, and how Tom said it was all leave really, only he mustn't mention it, because the Duchesses and Marchionesses had formed a secret society, called the Guards' Protection Association (Limited), to do all our duty for us, with sham moustachios."

"Yes; and then appeared that tremendous letter in the *Naval and Military Journal,*

signed 'A Hard-working Linesman,' about the 'Privileges of the Guards,' hinting at 'even the vicious state of our aristocracy adding its quota to their enervated frivolity and scandalous and luxurious idleness.'"

Thus they chattered on, while I, with a heavy feeling at my heart, tried to join in their mirth and share their nonsense; until the time came for even such as they to go to bed, and we separated, I to pack up my things preparatory to an early start for Ireland in the morning.

My visit to Ballyconor was short, and I could not wish it to be longer. There seemed some invisible barrier between my mother and myself which neither of us was able to break down, which rose up suddenly just as for a moment there was—or appeared to be—a chance of our understanding one another, and which made our intercourse a dreary succession of platitudes, tempered by spasmodic and abortive attempts at that sweet familiarity which should exist

between mother and son. Only once did she mention North's name, and then there came into her face a kind of dread and aversion, which made me hastily change the subject.

After a few days—during which I did a good deal of not over-satisfactory or pleasant business with Jim Leary, who looked upon my "emigration," as he insisted on calling it, with dismay—I took train for Queenstown, and there joined the good ship that was to bear me over sea. But before I did so I received and wrote two letters, which I will lay before my readers:—

"DEAR SIR MERVYN,

"I hear you have lost a great deal of money, and have exchanged into a line regiment in Canada. You were right to do the last—to look your difficulties in the face—as so few men of your age have the courage to do. Good-bye. Do not hate and despise me, Mervyn. We may never

meet again. So I must write and tell you how sincerely and truly I pray for your welfare. And my prayer will be heard. God is more merciful than man; and though you mistrust—nay, judge me—He knows the truth. Some day perhaps you will write to me to say 'good-bye.'

"Yours very sincerely,

"GERTRUDE MONYMUSK."

And this was my answer:—

"DEAR LADY MONYMUSK,

"I thank you for your good wishes. I have exchanged into the 110th, and am on the point of sailing to join it at Quereal. Probably I shall be away from England for five years.

"Yours truly,

"MERVYN O'CONNOR."

CHAPTER XVII.

TO AMERICA.

MOST people would probably suppose that a steamer in mid-Atlantic during the heights of an equinoctial gale was a very unpleasant place; and yet, putting aside any possible danger, there are many things connected with such a position which are diverting in a high degree. In the first place, given that you are not sea-sick, there is something very comic in the attitudes assumed by your friends when the ship gives a sudden lurch, and the fun is considerably heightened when you see a dignified man, whom you have for years believed to be a

hero even to his valet, rolling helplessly in the lee scuppers. Then the excitement of moving from that safe place under the lee of the boat to windward to the head of the companion is as good as a run with fox-hounds. How anxiously you watch the motion of the vessel, and take note of that wave yonder lifting his foam-crested head above his fellows! You are over him. What a roll! Now is the time to make the perilous voyage. You loosen your hold of a back-stay and set forth. Alas! The wave behind the monster for whose passing you had waited is another monster, not quite so high, but with equal unsteadying power. The ship jumps—literally jumps in the air. You seize the first thing that comes to hand—it happens to be the neck of the disagreeable-looking gentleman you have been so haughty to, having taken a dislike to him on embarking at Liverpool; but there is no time for apologies, and you both slide gracefully down the slippery

deck, until brought up by the lee-rail, and, with irrepressible merriment, become henceforth bosom friends.

Then the dinner—what a prolonged practical joke that is! How amiably and without malice your soup, before you have had time to taste it, comes into your lap; how pleasantly the steward behind you—while clutching at a brother steward, and causing him to break some five dozen plates—upsets that dish of Irish stew on to your head!

How amusing it is to watch the interior emotions of the gentleman opposite—who has just been chaffing the Captain on the bridge—as depicted by the changes of colour upon his face and by his increasing want of interest in his dinner. You mentally make bets with yourself as to how long he will last; and when, after a pitiful attempt at eating his boiled mutton, and with a smile that reminds you of the smile of an aged *coryphée* at a Paris theatre, he pleads

toothache, or a wish to brush his hair, or a desire to consult the chart, as a reason for hurriedly leaving the table, you must be hard to please indeed if you have not enjoyed the spectacle. We have all strength enough to bear the woes of others, as the French philosopher said; and it is astonishing how equably, how pleasantly, indeed, we can all, ourselves well, look on at the horrors of sea-sickness among our friends.

This is, of course, if we have passed the point of self-doubt. In a Channel passage observe that gentleman with the cigar, unlit, in his hand. His gaiety when, during the first quarter of an hour, he observes the contortions of the sufferers, is forced—he seems, when laughing at your witty remarks, to make some mental reserve—to have some pity for the victims of internal disturbance. In another quarter of an hour his countenance clears; he lights his cigar, he walks the deck with an assumption of

ease and a swagger which are imposing, he roars at the cadaverous face of yonder blue-cheeked Frenchman, he would hitch up his trousers *à la* T. P. Cooke if he only knew the way to perform that nautical-dramatic feat. This change is because he has tested himself; and just as we are always extra severe upon those faults we have only just escaped, so he is pitiless in his scathing ridicule of those unfortunates whose stomachs are less strong than his.

"The one quality I like above all others in a passenger," said a sea-captain once, "is sea-sickness. Then he can't ask stupid questions, and doesn't get in the way."

But to return to my Atlantic passage. The ten days passed in the way these ten days always do. At first slow and dreary, then monotonous but quick, until, when Sandy Hook was in sight, I could scarcely believe that three thousand miles intervened between home and me. There was a young lady on board, of course, with whom we all

flirted by turns, and on whose account the males got up a little mild fictitious hatred of each other; there was, of course, an old traveller, who indulged us with accounts of many perils by sea and land; there was, of course, the religious person, who gave us tracts when he was not sea-sick, and who took us all aside by turn to inquire after the state of our souls; there were the two Roman Catholic priests, as inseparable as Siamese twins, apparently engaged in a friendly contest as to which should present the broadest expanse of unshorn and bristly cheek and chin and the tiniest bit of dirty linen under it; there was the shrewd-looking, dried-up Yankee judge, with his indefatigable eagerness to ascertain facts from everyone—from the age of your last child to the colour of your wife's grandmother's hair, and with his intimate and somewhat mysterious knowledge of many English things —such as what Lord Beaconsfield says to his valet, and how much the Queen pays

her maid-servants—with which you as an Englishman can pretend to no acquaintance; there was the New England commercial traveller, who made up the list for each day's sweepstakes on the "run," and who sold the numbers with such dry humour and in such a hard voice, invariably buying in the likely ones for himself; there was the rubicund-visaged, pleasant doctor, whose only weakness, if it be a weakness, was for a game of whist and a few cocktails; there was the purser, who found time, amidst his other avocations, to make love and be of immense use to every decent-looking woman on board, whose cabin was full of photographs of his many Atlantic conquests, and who never by any chance made mention of the wife and seven children in that little house outside Liverpool; and, to come to the most important person last, there was the Captain —"old sea-dog," as the passengers reverently called him—whose jokes were as bad as

his knowledge of seamanship was good, and whose nose was rather redder than his ship's port light.

Our gale of wind on the third day out, in which we lost a boat and altogether got a good deal knocked about, made us all more intimate than we otherwise should have been, and I think, when we walked on shore at New York to go through the terrors of the Custom House examination, that many of us were really sorry to have come to an end of the voyage and to have set eyes on each other—at least, as far as most of us were concerned—for probably the last time.

There is something rather sad about friendships struck up in the course of a voyage. Of course, addresses are carefully written; promises of correspondence, of visits, are profusely made; but nevertheless by both parties they are known to be more or less hollow—it is good-bye for ever, as a rule; and that feeling throws an element

of sadness and sentiment into the last hour on board which is not quite subdued by the natural satisfaction at having gained our port, or even by the bustle of getting baggage together, paying one's bills, and making judicious presents to stewards and other functionaries of the ship.

In New York I did not linger long, for I was anxious to get to my regiment and begin duty; but of course I could not escape without receiving a little experience of American hospitality, which was then—as far, at any rate, as Englishmen were concerned—most lavish. During the week of my stay I could have eaten five dinners a night, and danced in as many ball-rooms; and, if I got a little tired of being asked what I thought of the country, still I, at any rate, was shown it through the rosiest of spectacles. One incident, I remember, amused me at the time. I was dining out, and a general officer sitting near me kept observing me with a puzzled and doubtful

expression of face. At last, when dinner was over, he took me aside.

"Sir," said he, very gravely, "may I ask you a question?"

"Certainly, General."

"Well, sir, I have heard you called a baronet. Is that so?"

"Yes; I am one."

"And yet you are going to join a British regiment as a subaltern? Look here—you'll excuse my curiosity—but are you a baronet or a lieutenant?"

When I told him I was both he left me, deeply disgusted; and henceforth I know the worthy man looked upon me as an impertinent impostor, whom only his good-nature prevented him from exposing.

At the Cheroot House, which was my hotel, I had for the first time an opportunity of observing the effect of so-called freedom on certain minds, and this episode may be worth transcribing.

The morning after my arrival I had

occasion to ring the bell. After having continued to do so at intervals for some half-hour I was startled by a blow on the outside of my door, at the bottom—evidently a kick.

"Come in!" I roared, thinking it was a strange way of knocking.

"What do you want?" was shouted from outside.

"Come in!" I again said. But as this produced no effect I opened the door. Leaning against the wall, deeply engaged in paring his nails with a knife, was a shock-headed youth, one of the hotel "helps." He looked at me with some interest—much as one looks at a new animal at the Zoological Gardens—and then calmly finished his right hand and commenced operations with his left, saying lazily, and as if the subject had very little interest for him—

"What were you ringing about? What do you want?"

By this time I was a little provoked.

"Why the deuce don't you come in and see?"

He looked at me again in that calm manner, and then replied, applying the knife carefully—

"I guess it'll do as well here."

"Go and get me some water."

He slowly shut up his knife, put his hands in his pockets, and, sauntering past me into my room, pressed the electric bell-button with the sole of his shoe. Having done this he was about to leave, when catching sight of something that interested him in the street, he stood gazing out of the window, whistling to himself the while.

It was too amusing to cause anger, and I watched him silently.

After a few minutes his interest in the view of Fifth Avenue died away, and, seeing me looking fixedly at him, he nodded his head, and said—

"Maid's business—she'll bring water. That's a nice stick. Guess you bought that in England. What may it have cost? Five dollars, now?"

He had taken up my cane, which lay on the table, and was twisting it about in his very dirty fingers.

"Put it down, you impudent scoundrel!"

"I shan't hurt it," he said; but a significant move on my part caused him to obey.

"Now take my boots and clean them."

"Your boots?"

"Yes. My boots."

"Where are they?"

"Lying there."

"Wal—give 'em to me."

"Pick them up at once; do you hear?"

He looked at the boots; then at me; then at the boots again; and then put his hands deep into his pockets.

"You should have left them outside. It's not my business to pick them up."

"It's your business to do what you're told."

"I'm not your servant."

"Yes, you are. At any rate——"

"I reckon you'll find you're wrong. We are all equal here, sir."

"And you get no wages?"

"I guess I get a salary." And he spat thoughtfully into the fireplace.

I could scarcely help laughing at his calm impudence, but I managed to say, gravely—

"Well, we won't argue about salary. I don't mind admitting that all men are equal."

"That's about so."

"Just as if there were no ranks, distinctions, and laws, and things—one man against another. The might of the People to rule everything."

"That's well said. Yes, the might

of the many against the tyranny of the few."

Of course the youth was a politician —all the lower classes in America are— and probably had picked this phrase up from a stump oration.

"Very well—might against right. Do you see this cane, and do you see me? I'm Might. You want to tyrannise over me by refusing to obey my orders—I am going to rebel against the tyranny. You say all men are equal, but you want to put yourself above me by getting wages for what you don't do, which is evidently unfair, as *I* can't manage it. So I, the People, rise in my majesty against you, the Tyrant. If you don't pick up those boots in one minute and take them downstairs to be blacked, I'll give you as sound a thrashing as you ever got in your life."

He looked at me to see if I was in earnest; he looked at the cane, ominously quivering in my hand; he looked at the boots, and as I made a step towards him

he picked them up and sullenly left the room.

"Come back and shut the door—gently. If you bang it I'll kick you down the passage."

I was close behind him with the cane, and he obeyed, taking a not very consolatory revenge by whistling "Yankee Doodle" when he was in comparative safety at the head of the staircase.

My next experience of equality and the rights of man was also funny, though in this case I gained no victory. I entered a barber's shop in Broadway. It was a small establishment, and at the time of my visit there were no customers, and the two operators were both seated in the shaving-chairs, with their feet up in the air, reading newspapers.

"I want to be shaved," I said.

One of them looked up, and then proceeded to read on.

Again I expressed my desire.

"One minute. I'm just reading Senator Candling's oration down at Louisville."

He finished his article, keeping me standing all the while—for he and his brother barber occupied the only chairs—and then rose slowly. I was about to place myself in the chair, and had actually removed my coat, when I noticed my friend pass his hand doubtfully over his own chin.

"Yes, I guess I'll be done first. Here, Seth, just give me a touch of a razor. I've got a party this afternoon, and my chin's like a nutmeg grater." And he sat down again, while the other rose and prepared to comply with his request.

"You impudent rascal!" I exclaimed; "do you mean to say you are going to keep me waiting while you are shaved?"

"I guess I have a right to be shaved in my own house. You can sit down there, if you like."

"We must accept the bad with the good," said a friend to whom I recounted this

experience. "The national independence, which is a good thing, carries with it, of course, some abuses. But even they do not detract from its immense value."

"I don't see anything independent in the absence of courtesy."

"No; I daresay you don't. But an American does. Courtesy so often means what you call respect shown by an inferior to a superior. Now an American, because he cleans your boots or shaves your chin, does not thereby acknowledge that he is not socially your equal."

"That may be; but there is no reason why, when you are paid to do a thing, you should not do it with civility and willingly. And these fellows are civil to each other, I suppose."

"Yes. The middle-class American's manner is perfect, as a rule."

"Then by rudeness, instead of showing himself my equal, he shows that he knows he isn't, and is protesting against my assump-

tion of a superiority to which he is aware I have a right."

"Well," said my American friend, avoiding my argument, "there was a Lord came from your country last year, and he had his name and title painted on his box, and coming up from Boston by the cars he called for some one to put this box in. Well, sir, it struck the boys there to make a joke of him, and to see whether the Lord could put in his box himself. So they told him to."

"And he did?"

"And he did. But he swore dreadfully."

"What was the business of the 'boys'?"

"Well—to look after luggage and that."

"And they showed their American independence by refusing to do their duty because it would have helped a Lord! Very fine!"

"Yes, sir; the story got about New York, and occasioned a good deal of laughter."

When I arrived at Quereal the tints of the fall were beginning to make the country around glorious with their varied hues; but the Society of that city had not returned from the watering-places to which it was *de rigueur* to go every autumn, and the town was most desperately dull. However, at first I had enough to do in making acquaintance with my brother officers and getting rid of the strong prejudice against me as an ex-Guardsman and probable swaggerer. Every now and then, watch myself as carefully as I could, some chance allusion to London life, some mention of a big name, would bring a sneer on the faces round the mess-table; and it was months before I had convinced them all that I was not in reality filled with contempt for all that did not savour of St. James's, nor was anxious to dazzle them with the splendour of my aristocratic acquaintance in London town.

Perhaps the thing that eventually won their hearts was my very evident hard-upness,

and my frank avowal of it; while my judicious snubbing of a certain Captain Poamer, a "beauty-man" of the hairdresser's model type, whose father had been a fashionable London tailor, and who prided himself upon being out of place and thrown away in a Line regiment, won me many friends among the youngsters, who had long half-admired and half feared the whiskered impostor.

Then the old stories gleaned at Clubs, which were useless in London, came out brand new in the 110th ante-room, while, when rosy wine (Moselle at twenty-four shillings a dozen) on a guest night had opened their hearts, and for the moment dispelled suspicion as to my intention of self-glorification, the recountal of what the Duke of A—— said to Lord B—— at Ascot, or how the Marchioness of C—— had snubbed poor Lady D—— at Buckingham Palace, gave a tinge of aristocratic flavour to the regiment, which was acceptable to all, and especially so to dear old Binks, the

Quartermaster, who had risen from the ranks, and spent all his little leave when at home with his old mother, who kept a snuff shop in St. Mary Axe.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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